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W. C. TUTTLE *Will brighten the day for you with* Mary's Little Lamb

And the havoc he caused among the Piperock ranch-owners and cowpunchers.

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TURQUOISE CAÑON

A Complete Novel

by J. ALLAN DUNN

Author of "The Petals of Lao-Tze," "Lost Cañon," etc.

CHAPTER I

DOUBLE-EAGLES

JIMMY HOLLISTER found himself suddenly wide awake, aroused from the deep sleep of exhaustion by the clarion-call of his subconsciousness. He was unable to determine which one of his senses had sounded the alarm, and lay wide-eyed with all of them alert.

The window was a hazy oblong of gray in the blackness of the walls. Through it the moonlight had streamed when he turned in, stiff from his long day's ride after rebellious cattle. He figured it must be well after midnight. For the moment he could hear nothing but the shrilling of the persistent locusts from the hillsides. Then his nostrils dilated gratefully as they inhaled the aroma of a cigar, diluted by distance, faint but unmistakable.

It was a good cigar. One of the kind Jimmy had smoked up till two weeks ago. It seemed more like two years at the present moment. He desired its fellow so ardently that he was tempted to go downstairs and ask the envied smoker to give him one, for the love of Sir Walter Raleigh!

It was not Stimpson. He smoked cigarets with paper-tube mouth-pieces that looked utterly incongruous amid the tangle of his black beard and matched ill with his bigness and swagger and the gun that swung heavily from his flank. Besides, Jimmy felt certain, as he tried to whip his drowsy brain-cells into action, that it was not the cigar that had awakened him.

It was a topsy-turvy world, he reflected, and a fell fortune that had kicked him from a luxurious suite in a Colorado Springs

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hotel, built especially for the relief of plethoric pocketbooks, to the bed he was now lying on in the attic of a lonely ranch-house.

But he was glad of the job, as he had told Stimpson when the latter hired him in front of the employment agency, where he had stood wondering how best a college-bred, soft-handed son of leisure would fit the requirements chalked on the "Help Wanted" board.

That was ten days after he had paid up his bill at the Antlers with the balance of his cash and the money raised on his personal jewelry. A topsy-turvy world! One moment he had been planning a tour of Colorado with half a dozen casual, convivial acquaintances as his guests; the next, he had opened the letter that held, not the generous draft he had demanded from his New York agent, but the news that the bottom had dropped out of Jerusalem Copper and that he was penniless, save for a few scrapings that would take time to gather and would not amount in the main to a week's expenses of his average mode of living.

There was his father, of course; but James Hollister, Sr., had, to Jimmy's mind, handicapped the inheritance of millions with so many hurdles in the course of youth, health and high spirits that Jimmy had scratched his entry, plunged on a tip in "War Babies," made a pile that seemed unlimited, even to his lavishness, and convinced him that money-making was a much simpler task than his father would have had him think.

Now that he had come a cropper on his own high horse, he was not going to ask his father for a fresh mount. It was tough, he told himself, but he set a square chin and shoulders to their best angle of resistance and made the most of it.

He was hungry when Stimpson accosted him. He had told the bluff-mannered giant what he deemed his sole commercial accomplishment from a Colorado standpoint. He could ride. He did not mention the fact that most of his experience had been gained in the polo field. He had a strong suspicion that Stimpson had him sized up with fair accuracy and wondered, while he exulted, at securing the job.

"I want a rider," Stimpson had said. "And you're the kind of man I like. I've got a place thirty miles southwest of here, on Antelope Creek, in the foot-hills. Some cattle. You'll handle them. You can pick up the work. I've got a good cook, and the pay is forty. What do you say?"

"Forty dollars?"

"A month, spot cash. I've got a rig waiting. We start after lunch."

Jimmy's hand fingered the fifteen cents that seemed the only frail bulwark between himself and starvation, and felt that Fortune smiled. He smiled with the fickle jade.

"Do I eat first?" he asked.

"Sure."

It had been a lonely ride through a lonesome country after the first ten miles. Stimpson drove the spirited team silently, his good-nature relapsed into a reticence that left Jimmy feeling very much the hired man. The ranch-house was in a pocket of the hills, apparently only linked to civilization by the road and the barbed wire of the line fence.

To Jimmy's astonishment the dingy-looking house was furnished almost luxuriously. He noted heavy rugs, a player-piano, a buffet with glass doors that revealed a miniature bar, and chairs that would have called for cheers from Jimmy's recent fellows at his New York club.

The cook was a Chinaman, an onyx-eyed, putty-fleshed individual who cooked venison steaks to perfection.

Jimmy had dined in the kitchen with the only other employee, a swarthy deaf-mute he thought a half-breed Indian. But he had enjoyed the venison. His own room was not furnished on the down-stairs scale. An iron bed with scaling paint, a hard mattress and a pine chest of drawers that needed a combination of coaxing and main force to open, made up its equipment. But it had been welcome to Jimmy after he had ridden with the deaf-mute to find a scattered bunch of cattle and herd them in a corral.

The Chinaman was as sparing of speech as his master. The latter's bluffness began to take on a bullying manner on his own ground. Jimmy resented it, but he had seen little of his employer, and the forty dollars still loomed large on his impoverished horizon. Stimpson apparently did nothing.

There was a pile of cigaret stubs beside the outside bench where he was sitting when Jimmy had come in that evening, sweating

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and sore, from the corral. The Chinaman brought out a fresh siphon and filled up the tall glass that Stimpson replenished from a nearly empty bottle of Scotch. There was ice in the highball. Jimmy's mouth puckered now at the remembrance of it.

"CLINK!" There it was again. That must have been the sound that had awakened him. It came once more. Now it sounded too heavy for the jubilant sound of ice against glass. Raising himself on one elbow, he listened intently.

It was the clink of metal, the indisputable ring of golden coins, dulled by the flooring, but distinct. Jimmy had handled enough of them in his favorite pastime of seeing how far and fast he could make them spin, to be mistaken. It sounded again, the richly resonant *chuck* of a high stack of double-eagles, in the chosen currency of the States west of the Rocky Mountains, where greenbacks are looked upon with an open suspicion equal to that of the Vermonter offered a twenty-dollar disk of the yellow metal.

He felt as sure of their denomination as he did of that of the three nickels in his overalls. The murmur of voices followed, rising almost to words that he could distinguish, then suddenly hushed.

He thought he heard a cautious tread on the stairs. A board on the landing creaked ever so lightly. Stealing out of bed barefooted to the door, he tried softly to open it. It was locked.

Going to the window, he eased up the lower sash. The weathered walls of the nearest outbuilding showed the dull reflection of light from the room below. Above the peak of its roof the Colorado sky was thickly set with stars. The cool air held the scent of sage blended with the exotic perfume of the cigar. The voices were now subdued to a low murmur.

Jimmy returned to his bed and slipped on his clothes without analyzing the reason for his action, save that the mystery of the situation was on his nerves. He figured himself as an insignificant factor in whatever was going on, but he felt better dressed. There was an automatic in his grip, and he tiptoed across the room and got it out.

The cool feel of the metal was reassuring. A gun was a good deal of a toy to Jimmy. He had bought it principally because he had come West. Now he was glad he had not pawned it, mainly on account of his wrath at the Hebrew money-lender in offering him two dollars for an unused twenty-dollar weapon.

He went back to the window and hung over the ledge, straining his ears to catch the low-voiced syllables. The light on the outbuilding heightened suddenly with the click of a raised blind. Then the window below him opened. A spiral of cigar smoke curled upward.

"Better shut it." It was Stimpson's bass.

"Let's have some fresh air. You could cut this with a knife. You said the kid was asleep."

Jimmy's twenty-six years hotly resented the epithet. The next sentence augmented his choler.

"He's only a Manhattan sucker, stranded on his uppers. But you can't be too careful."

"What did you hire him for?"

"I'm running a ranch, ain't I?"

The words seemed to hold a joke that was appreciated. Then the man retreated from the window, without shutting it. An impulse stirred Jimmy to caution. Wriggling back, he closed his sash and crouched beneath it. A bulky shadow projected itself against the reflection on the barn. Some one—it looked like Stimpson's shadow to Jimmy—had come silently out of the house and was looking up at his window.

He waited several minutes before he peered out. The yard was clear, and he slid up the sash once more and resumed his position. The men were poking fun at the Chinaman.

"Bring some more ice, Ah Fung. This wouldn't keep a toad cool."

"Plenty ice now. Mebbe bimeby some place you go you no find so much."

There was more laughter at the sally, followed by the noises of bottle neck and glass rim.

"Are you sure the stuff is going to be here tomorrow, Stimpy? We don't want to hang 'round the Springs too long. What we've got ain't hardly enough to pay for the trip."

"I told you the girl was a day late. There's the telegram."

"Pretty risky, a girl packing it, isn't it?"

"What do you want to do? Ship it by

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Wells Fargo and have some baggage-smasher bust a box and give the whole thing away."

"You're a fox, Stimpy. Is the girl wise?"

"She's no fool. But that's my end of it."

His deep voice held a note of bluster.

"Is she pretty, that's what I want to know. Hanged if I don't think I'll stay here tonight, Stimpy, and get a look at her."

The speaker had evidently been drinking. Stimpson answered him with a growling volley of oaths.

"You attend to your end of it, —— you, and I'll look after mine. The less people seen, 'round here in daytime the better."

"Stimpy's right," said another. "Don't be an ass, Slim."

There was the swift confusion of a struggle. A bottle smashed against the window-frame. Jimmy could hear the fragments of it tinkling on the ground beneath him. A shot followed and the sound of a falling chair. Then the shuffling of feet, and silence.

"You've plugged him, Stimpy."

"Serves him right."

"That queers it. We can't pack around a man shot through the shoulder."

"Then you'll have to patch him up and get him away somewhere. I'll not have him here. He can stand the trip to Denver. You'll have to come back in a week. Call the Chink, some one, and we'll bandage him up. The bullet's gone clean through. Shut that window. We'll take him in the kitchen. He's ruined that chair already."

The window was slammed down. Feet shuffled once more and the sound died away.

"I like Stimpson—not," said Jimmy to himself. "A cheerful crowd, the lot of them. I wonder what the stuff is the girl is bringing? They seemed to have plenty of money to pay for it. I think I'll stick close around the house tomorrow. What's the next act, I wonder?"

He had not long to wait. The purr of a motor-car broke the quiet. The glare of powerful headlights flared out and caught the corner of the barn in an iridescent arc that was swept into the road as the car turned.

"Eight cylinders," decided Jimmy in the light of other days. "Some little car. There she goes. I wonder how long before Stimpy lets me out of here. I'll have to play the innocent in the morning. I won't sleep tonight, that's certain. It's getting light already."

As he turned from the window before closing it he could faintly make out the outlines of his scanty furnishings. A hill-side echo mocked the whirr of the fast-speeding car. He caught the distant rattle of dishes from the kitchen. The deaf-mute crossed the yard and let down the bars to a lane up which two cows were slowly coming to be milked.

Jimmy grinned.

"Looks peaceful enough now," he muttered. "I'll get out of these clothes again in case Stimpy takes a notion to give me a personal call."

As he slipped between the rough blankets he heard the sound of a heavy tread on the stairs.

CHAPTER II

DEBORAH DANE

"SLEEP well?"

Forewarned, Jimmy's yawn was perfectly natural. He felt Stimpson's dark eyes keenly scrutinizing him as he answered:

"Like a log. Time to get up?"

"Sun's due in fifteen minutes. We get up early here. Si shot a coyote a little while ago."

"Si?"

Still conscious of the intent gaze of his employer, Jimmy covered any possible fault in his acting by starting to dress.

"Who's Si?"

Stimpson laughed. The tension of suspicion seemed to have passed.

"He's my other man that's working with you. 'Si' is short for Silent. He ain't managed to tell us his other name, seeing he's deef, dumb, and forgot to go to school. I've got a light job for you to-day. There's a break in the fence somewhere. I want you to start right after breakfast, ride the wire and locate it. Get Ah Fung to put you up a snack, it may take you time to find it, and it's got to be fixed."

In the light of last night's experience Jimmy knew that Stimpson lied, that the fence was intact and the job manufactured to keep him clear of the ranch-house. His employer was once more watching him narrowly, and he replied promptly.

"That sounds like a snap. I'll find it before I show up. This work suits me, and I'm going to make good."

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"That's the talk. Slide along and get your grub."

Jimmy obeyed, satisfied that Stimpson had appraised him as he had wished him to, an out-of-luck drifter, anxious to make willingness balance his lack of brains.

"I'll find a break in that fence," he told himself, "if I have to make it myself. That'll give me an excuse to come back. I can forget my tools."

Ah Fung's eyes, like the agates of Jimmy's marble-playing childhood, regarded him inscrutably during the meal. He paused in apparently friendly fashion after loading Jimmy's plate with hot cakes and spoke.

"You *sabe* kyoty? Him shoot one las' night."

Jimmy, looking at the stolid half-breed with proper interest, asked,

"Did he kill it?"

A wraith of humor flickered in the Oriental's orbs and faded.

"No, he no kill. Kyoty, I think, he long time plenty lame."

"So Ah Fung is in on the game," thought Jimmy. "If I stick around here long enough I'll get wise to a few things myself. There's something out of the ordinary in the wind."

Still thinking it over, he cantered away on his pony. The mount was a good one, and as he danced away on springy fetlocks over the soft, powdery soil that lay between the clumps of sage, Jimmy, drinking in the rare, exhilarating air, felt very well satisfied with life.

A little chagrin manifested itself as he realized that Stimpson's choice of him had been prompted by his tenderfoot appearance. His employment was evidently a blind to aid a general conviction that Stimpsan was a rancher, pure and simple.

"A lot he cares about cattle," thought Jimmy. "They didn't bring him in the money I heard clinking last night. I wonder just how much of a fool he thinks I am? I must look like one. I suppose he couldn't find another deaf-mute, so he hired a greenhorn.

"I'd like to know what that crowd with the eight-cylinder car and the fifty-cent cigars were doing here. It wouldn't be just gambling. There's something crooked going on, and I'd like to find out what it is. I may be able to stir up a little excitement, after all."

Following the fence until a rise hid him from the sight of any one who might be watching from the ranch, he let his pony graze and mounted the ridge, making himself comfortable in a notch of rim-rock, and settled down to watch the road that looped like a white ribbon among the gray hills. The straight stretch of half a mile that led to the ranch gate was plainly visible.

Locusts whirred and lizards flickered about the rocks as he watched. He saw the deaf-mute ride off in the opposite direction on what Jimmy told himself was another fool's errand. Ah Fung came out, threw some scraps to the chickens, then went into the house.

Presently Stimpson wandered out to the gate and stood there looking down the road. In the clear air Jimmy could see the white patch of the cigaret in his black beard and fancied he could distinguish the blue curl of its smoke.

"Getting anxious," he muttered. "The girl must be due."

He wondered idly if she was pretty. Jimmy was not overkeen on girls. As a general rule he rather regarded them as nuisances. But, when he liked them, he liked them pretty, and he liked them to qualify as out-of-doors women.

"I wouldn't trust Stimpy very far with a woman," he decided. "He was mighty anxious not to have the rest stick around. I wonder——"

He broke his thought abruptly. A cloud of dust was rising at the first curve of the road. It resolved itself into a light buckboard drawn by two horses. A slender figure in gray held the reins. Two big trunks filled the space between the seats.

"Looks like a kid," said Jimmy to himself. "Drives well, though, hands down and shoulders back like a good one. Regular park style. I must find that break in the fence."

Chuckling, he pried out several staples' length with the handle of his pliers and trampled down the wire. Then he tossed the tool over his shoulder.

"There, I've lost the confounded thing," he said aloud. "Maybe I left it at the ranch?"

He remounted and made a swift circuit of the crest of the hill, so that he would appear to have ridden back by a short cut. He rode on down a dry arroyo that led into the little stream that watered the ranch buildings. It was fringed with

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willows and edged with turf, on which his pony's hoofs were noiseless.

Passing the side of a barn, he heard the sound of voices talking in the narrow way between two of the buildings. The light road wagon with the two trunks stood in the scanty shadow, the team hitched to a cottonwood.

THE girl was speaking. A note of apprehension in her voice made Jimmy rein in and listen without compunction while he soothed his fretful mount with one hand on its neck. The voice held a quality both girlish and refined, and it had a certain ring to it that struck an answering note somewhere inside of Jimmy's ego. Here was a girl of his own breed. Moreover, his instinct told him that she was a nice one.

"I don't know what you mean," she said. "Please give me the receipt, Mr. Stimpson, and let me go."

"Now see here, young lady. I'm getting sick of this innocence pose of yours." Stimpson's growling bass was impatient. "You can pretend you don't know anything about your father's business if it makes you feel any better. It's the wise thing to do, but cut it out with me. I wrote your father to tell you what I wanted. He allowed he could handle you better than I could. Now then, what's the answer?"

"My father told me nothing except to get your receipt. I am waiting for it."

"Oh, he didn't, eh? Well, if he's afraid of you, I'm not. And he ain't going to go back on his word without getting into trouble. He ought to know which side his bread is buttered on, and yours comes off the same loaf.

"Now then, we're tied pretty close as it is, and I'm proposing to make the knot firmer for our mutual benefit. I haven't hurried the matter because I wasn't ready. Now I am. It's been understood between me and your dad, and he should have told you. I'm looking to get married and I've picked you. He's promised you to me."

"My father promised I would marry you?"

Jimmy almost chuckled aloud at the scornful wonder of the question. He slid softly to the ground and dropped the reins to trail.

"He did. I want the matter settled. How long do you want to get ready?"

"You are making yourself ridiculous, Mr. Stimpson. Please give me my receipt and stand aside."

Stimpson's answer came in an explosion of wrath.

"Ridiculous, am I? Well, it's not you who'll make a fool of Jabez Stimpson. I'm as good as you are any day."

He seemed to calm himself with an effort as Jimmy's fists balled themselves for action.

"There's no occasion for high and mightiness, young lady. I'm not a fancy wooer, though I've taken a fancy to you all right. I can make love fast enough when it comes down to it."

Jimmy took a light step forward.

"And you'll find me the best match you can make for all your frills and fine ways."

"Give me the receipt." The words were icy.

Stimpson suddenly laughed. At the sound of it Jimmy precipitated himself into action.

"I'll give you the receipt," said the ranchowner. "Ten packages there was. Now then——"

Swinging in the passageway, Jimmy heard the sharp *swack* of the girl's hand on Stimpson's cheek. He had caught her up in his arms and, despite her struggles, was gradually forcing her face upward to meet his own, one great hand cupping the back of her head where a coil of hair, brilliantly red in the sunshine, streamed between his fingers to her waist.

Jimmy took a leap, skip and jump that landed him fairly beside them. He struck heavily at the elbow crook of Stimpson's left arm which encircled the girl's waist and hooked the fingers of his right hand into the collar of the ranchowner's shirt, tearing him loose with the sheer impetus of his rush as the girl whirled herself free.

He was barely conscious of her, one hand to her disordered hair, the other fumbling with the belt of her dress, when Stimpson, stumbling back against the barn wall, recovered his balance and, roaring like a bull, started to draw the gun that swung at his right hip.

Jimmy remembered that gun, though he had forgotten his own in the lack of accustomed use. He grabbed at Stimpson's wrist with his left hand and warded off with his right the smashing blow that was aimed at his head.

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The alleyway was no place for a fight. In it Stimpson's heavier bulk and bull strength held all the advantage. Jimmy felt his hold slipping on the massive wrist and quickly shifted, pinioning his man about the elbows, grappling with him fiercely and trying to trip him for a fall. Stimpson grunted at the swift fury of the rush, but his legs seemed solidly planted on the ground and all the drive and fury of Jimmy's attack failed to do more than hold him to a clinch.

They swayed back and forth between the buildings, straining for a master grip, panting hard, the sweat already starting under the hot noon sun. Jimmy felt the great muscles bulging in Stimpson's brawny arms and his own clutch slowly being forced apart. He almost groaned as he realized that in a moment there would be a flash, a report and the end of the fight.

He remembered his own automatic now. It was in his hip pocket and the safety catch was up. Before he could get it out Stimpson's superior use of the weapon would have settled matters. His interlocked fingers at Stimpson's back were beginning to slip. In another second....

From the corner of his eye he saw the girl dart in toward them and back again, a brief vision of flashing blue eyes in a pale, determined face.

Stimpson swore as she called out—

"I've got his gun."

Jimmy acted promptly. He was no match for Stimpson at close quarters and he was not in the pink of condition, but at that, he was better off than Stimpson. There was one soft spot in the latter's anatomy, a stomach born of overindulgence and lack of exercise. Jimmy leaped suddenly backward and in again between Stimpson's clutching arms, driving in a straight-armed punch with all his force that sent his man staggering, while the tan of his cheek above the dark line of his beard flushed to an angry red.

Stimpson came back, flailing sledge-hammer blows that threatened to beat down Jimmy's defense. He broke ground, leading Stimpson on to where the alley led into a corral whose bars were down. Jimmy leaped over the obstacle backwards but Stimpson, blundering on, caught his foot against one of the poles and went floundering forward with outstretched arms, trying not to fall.

Jimmy side-stepped and planted a hard jolt to the jaw as his opponent passed him. He put all his force behind it and felt the jar of the bone behind the thick hair, but Stimpson did not drop. Instead, he wheeled, straightening up, his face convulsed, blood dripping to the mat of his beard from a lip cut through by his teeth under the impact of the blow.

Jimmy danced away. He had plenty of room now, and as long as he could keep clear he felt sure of the issue. Stimpson's stomach labored heavily as he breathed through his open mouth, grunting oaths that were barely articulated.

The girl had climbed the fence of the corral and was seated on the top bar. Beyond, in the next inclosure, the curious heads of cattle made a strange audience. The gun was poised in her hand.

"Don't shoot," cried Jimmy. "I've got him."

He had found his second wind and he was beginning to enjoy himself. He knew how to handle his fists, and there was a special zest to this fight in front of an insulted woman and the lowing herd. He got home to his mark for the first time at the expense of a punch that caught him high above the heart but failed to check his drive to the wind, fairly at the junction of shirt and trousers.

Stimpson's bellow was checked for lack of breath and Jimmy, feinting for the jaw, landed a second jolt in the pit of the stomach.

As he followed up his advantage he heard a cry of warning from the girl, but Stimpson had gripped him, and he was exerting all his strength to break away, and failed to catch its purport.

The next second the ranchowner tripped against the base of a watering-trough and fell heavily, striking his side against the U-shaped iron receptacle.

Jimmy plumped down upon his chest. His shirt was torn to tatters, he was drenched with sweat and his heart was pounding, but he was triumphant. Stimpson lay still, his face gray with pain. Jimmy got free his automatic and, rising, sat panting on the edge of the trough, his weapon covering the prostrate man.

He half turned toward the girl, a wary eye on Stimpson.

"Shall I let him up?" he asked.

"Wait a minute," she said.

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STIMPSON moved painfully and took Jimmy's attention. Then he saw Ah Fung with his hands high above his queue-braided head, walking sulkily to the fence, the girl behind him, Stimpson's gun in one hand and in the other a long knife that Jimmy placed as one of the Chinaman's culinary blades.

"He tried to run in on you," said the girl. "Climb over there with the steers, Ah Fung."

"Me no like. Me too much flaid."

"Climb over. And stay there till I tell you to come out."

Jimmy laughed at the ludicrous picture of the scared Oriental clambering reluctantly over the high fence, menaced alternately by the pistol and the horns of the uneasy cattle. But the girl's face was serious and he protestingly descended on the other side. The steers opened and then closed in a circle about him, sniffing with lowered heads. The girl turned to Jimmy.

"Thank you," she said.

"Don't mention it," he said gravely.

For the few moments in which he had been able to regard her, disappointment had come to him. She was not pretty, he told himself. She had gorgeous hair and a slender, rounded figure that was graceful in almost a boyish way. Her skin from throat to hair-line was an even pale, golden tan. Her mouth was a little large and her nose nondescript. She had fine eyes, dark blue and frank. Altogether she would not have been chosen as a film beauty.

Then she laughed at her perfunctory gratitude and his conventional reply, and Jimmy changed his mind.

Her eyes danced, white, small teeth flashed between scarlet lips, and her whole face seemed illumined like a transparent shade behind which a lamp has been suddenly lighted. On their mutual laughter a bridge of fellowship and understanding seemed suddenly to have been established.

"What'll I do with him?" asked Jimmy.

"You'll have to let him up, I suppose."

"Get up," said Jimmy.

Stimpson helped himself to a stand with a twist of pain.

"You've broken my ribs, —— you," he said. "I'll get even with both of you for this."

"Easy with your language," said Jimmy evenly. "I think you said you needed a receipt, Miss——?"

She ignored the opportunity to supply her name.

"I do," she said. "That's what I am waiting for."

"Then sign it," said Jimmy.

Stimpson glared at him furiously.

"I can't use this arm," he said.

"Then make your mark. We'll go into the house. Then you can come back and let Ah Fung out. He's too scared to move."

Once in the sitting-room, Jimmy searched and found pen and ink. Stimpson, still under the coercion of the automatic, sat glowering at the table. The girl stood at the open door, in case Ah Fung should gather courage to return or some one else interfere.

"Where's the receipt?" asked Jimmy.

She took it from an inner pocket of her trim Norfolk jacket. Without looking at it Jimmy set it in front of Stimpson.

"Sign it," he said.

With evident pain Stimpson managed to scrawl a signature, and Jimmy handed it back to the girl.

"There you are, Miss——?"

Again she appeared not to notice the query of his rising inflection.

"I saw your wagon back of the barn. Is it all ready?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes, thank you. I was only waiting for the receipt."

She set Stimpson's weapon down on the table by Jimmy's hand and disappeared. He looked after her ruefully as he presently heard the quick crunch of wheels on gravel, the spatter of horses' hoofs and the rattle of the rig's swift departure.

Stimpson forced a short laugh.

"That's what you get for your pains, you young fool. Now you can walk to town. Do you hear me?" he shouted. "You're fired."

"Naturally," said Jimmy. "Case of *ipso facto*. I'm off as soon as I get my stuff and say a few things that are on my mind.

"You said something just now about getting even. As far as I'm concerned you are welcome to try. It's probably brag. I overheard a few things last night and today and, if you try to persecute that girl in any way, I'll make things lively for you. You shot a man in this room last night. It's possible you don't want the matter inquired into. That's one check for you. Outside of that, I'll make it my business to give you another licking."

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"You crow loud for a young cock," said Stimpson. "Why, you fool, you don't even know her name. She wouldn't tell you when you tried to make her."

"Don't I?" said Jimmy, with a grin. "How's this? Deborah Dane, Curly O Rancho, Aztec, San Juan County, New Mexico."

Stimpson's glare became murderous, his face apoplectic.

"Now," said Jimmy, "I'm going to treat you to your own medicine. You're going up-stairs with me while I pack. Then I'll lock you up in my room the same way you did me."

Fifteen minutes later, listening gleefully to Stimpson in the bedroom shouting fruitlessly to Ah Fung in the cattle corral, Jimmy was tramping down the road that stretched for thirty dusty, thirsty, hungry miles to Colorado Springs. The fifteen cents, too insignificant to jingle, still represented his sole capital.

He had not wasted his time asking Stimpson for the fractional salary due him. He was stiff and sore from riding and the fight; and, unless some friendly wagon appeared, he was likely to be stiffer before he reached the Springs. But he was happy. The only fly in his ointment was the way the girl had treated him at the last.

At the bend of the road he shifted the grip that held all his worldly possessions into his left hand and cast a farewell look at the ranch. He could still hear Stimpson's muffled bellowing. A moving speck on a distant ridge he felt sure was Si returning from his errand. Not all the ranch-owner's shouts would hurry Si an iota.

Jimmy chuckled.

"I wish I had his horse," he said aloud to an inquisitive blue jay that had lit on the fence beside him. "She might have given me a lift. She was pretty, after all, but for sheer ingratitude she wins hands down."

He started down the long slope, whistling, in full recognition of its appropriateness:

It's a long, long way to Tipperary,
It's a long way to go——

CHAPTER III

A SHEARED LAMB AND SOME GOATS

IT WAS a week later. Jimmy, clothed in the garments of conventionality, and with a contented mind, stood by the desk of the Brown Palace Hotel, Denver, waiting for the clerk to give him the key to his room and bath.

After an undignified and, to admit the truth, somewhat crestfallen arrival at Colorado Springs, Jimmy had squeezed the Hebrew pawnbroker up to two dollars and a half for his automatic pistol. He had split this sum two ways. One half went for a night letter to his New York agent to wait not upon the order of his gathering up what was left by the shearers of Wall Street of the once magnificent fleece that Jimmy, in his rôle of lamb, had sported so proudly.

The other was expended so lavishly at a cheap restaurant that its owner took the brief flash in the pan seriously and sat down by Jimmy at the end of his meal with a suggestion that he needed a partner, with cash, for the proper development of the place. Jimmy's laugh and frank avowal of his financial stress did not seem to dampen the other's appreciation.

"I'm doing the cooking," he said. "I need some one square to handle the cash. If you want to set up behind the register for a day or so till you get the answer you're expecting, why you're welcome to your meals and a bunk in the back room."

"But why?" Jimmy had asked. "Why pick me?"

"Like your style. You've got a good eye and a good jaw. You'll be ridin' high before you get through."

All this was manna in the wilderness, and the restaurant-keeper's confidence stiffened Jimmy's backbone materially. For four days he rang up receipts and made change and, on the fifth, there came a telegram from New York which read:

Three thousand wired your account First National Colorado Springs. Could have been more if willing to wait. Best possible under circumstances. Good luck. RITCHIE.

Jimmy had gathered and bidden farewell to his friend of the restaurant, resisting a final offer to come in on the ground floor and, with his belongings freed from the thraldom of pawn, he had gone to Denver to find something that, with a limited capital, plus health, youth and ambition, minus practical knowledge, might offer a fair chance of profitable investment. Aside from the excitement, his few hours at the Stimpson ranch had given him a fancy for some similar, out-of-doors employment,

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not as a hired hand but as his own master, to whom inexperience would be a negligible debit.

Jimmy still liked to select his dishes from a good menu without regard to price marks, and his taste in cigars was expensive. But he bought a pipe and five pounds of good tobacco and resolved to set a great gap between himself and the fleshpots of Colorado's capital as soon as possible. He had begun to learn the true value of money. His ideas of investment were vague and ranged from ore to orchards, from cattle to canteloupes.

As he stood, he was a shining mark for the Colorado sharpshooters mustered under the banner of "Real Estate and Investment." So far he had not wandered near enough for them to choose their weapons and estimate the range and no one, seeing him in the rotunda, dressed in the clothes that had given a Fifth Avenue sartorial artist much care and final satisfaction, would have imagined Jimmy to be anything but what he had been the last time he registered at the Palace, a care-free, money-careless, roving son of a millionaire father.

Jimmy knew the difference. The keen remembrance of the three nickels acted as a constant reminder that there was not the mammoth gap between them and three thousand dollars that the hasty mathematics of youth usually accounted.

"I wonder if I'm getting tight," he had asked himself that noon as he tipped the waiter a sum that would have meant comparative affluence to Jimmy ten days ago. "Perhaps I'm just cutting my wisdom teeth. I've got to quit putting out and begin to take in, that's certain."

The clerk having condescended to recognize him, Jimmy's hand was outstretched for the key when he saw a girl stepping into one of the elevators. For a second his heart seemed to turn a somersault, to Jimmy's own surprise.

That the sight of Deborah Dane interested him, he was prepared to admit, but the sudden flutter of an organ that had hitherto behaved itself with exemplary regularity startled him out of his self-possession. The bronze gate slid to at the wave of the starter, and a fleeting glimpse of red hair beneath a tricorne hat assured him that he was not mistaken. He turned to the clerk, who was still holding the key.

"Miss Dane staying here?" he asked.

The clerk languidly turned to his record. He did not know of Jimmy's harlequin finances and he had him rated high as a lavish guest. He answered accordingly.

"Miss Deborah Dane, Aztec, New Mexico," he announced. "K 14. Stays here regularly, every two or three months. Going home tomorrow."

Jimmy felt instinctively for a cigar, but reserved the reward at the remembrance of his abstinence. She was here and going home to-morrow! He put his key in his pocket and sat down in the corner of an empty lounge to settle his emotions.

She had left him to walk thirty miles, but there might be an excuse for that. She had a smile that made her face look like the sunrise on Pike's Peak, and she was a thoroughbred—he was sure of that. He remembered the way she had handled Ah Fung. Then there was the mystery of her association with Stimpson and the "stuff" she had brought to the ranch, presumably in the trunks, on one of which he had read her name and so surprised Stimpson with the information.

His mental debate came to its inevitable conclusion. He wanted to see her again, at least to get one smile out of her. Further than that he did not stir up the feelings of interest that he dimly resented. He could not yet see Hollister in the light of a dangler after any particular girl, no matter how well she smiled.

Inevitably she must descend, he decided. The lounge commanded the elevators. He had just lunched. The girl, sooner or later, would dine. Perhaps, he caught himself ordering the kind of dinner he thought she would enjoy—in his company—and frowned at this lingering evidence of inherent extravagance.

Besides, unconventional as their meeting had been, she was known at the hotel, she was dressed in what Jimmy vaguely recognized as taste combined with fashion. Denver was not Stimpson's ranch. If he was to treat her with respect in Rome, and he wished to, he must do as the Romans do and secure a matron for chaperon. An introduction, fortunately, he did not need.

He failed to realize that this complete occupation of his thoughts by the fair was a dangerous symptom. Instead he once more reached for a cigar to aid reflection, recollected his self-imposed tabu and got out his pipe and filled it.

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"GOOD tobacco you're smoking, pardner."

Jimmy turned to see a lanky individual with a bronzed face, high cheekbones and humorous, friendly eyes under shaggy, grizzly brows. The top of his sloping dome was hairless, the hirsute energy seeming to have broken out in a shaggy mare's-tail of a beard. His upper lip was clean-shaven. His clothes were evidently his go-to-city suit, and beneath his trousers projected the lowers of high leather boots.

The Brown Palace rotunda was, by long custom, the meeting-place for all sorts and conditions of Colorado flotsam and jetsam. Jimmy was no fool. He knew that the gold brick had been modernized into many new shapes and that he might appear easy. But he warmed instinctively to the stranger, who seemed almost wistfully lonesome.

"I think it's good," he said cordially. "Try some?" And he passed his pouch.

The man—Jimmy was irresistibly reminded of the Bock beer placards on a closer inspection—took the bag and dipped into it, filling an old briar to the brim and scratching a match on his bootleg.

"That's some better than I've been puffin' on," he said. "I use Star Plug mostly. It's better chewin' than smokin', but it's putty fair. Nothin' like this, though. I'm goin' to take some back to the ranch if I ain't askin' too much in the name of the brand."

Jimmy told him, one eye on the elevator.

"Cattle?" he asked casually.

"No siree. Steers is played out. No range left, 'cept for sheep, and I hate 'em on general principles. Kind of compromised at that, but I've struck the combination. Goats."

Jimmy idly wondered whether the companionship of his herd had resulted in a fellow likeness, but he politely evinced interest.

"What do you feed 'em? Tin cans?"

"Haw—haw! That's a good one. But I'll tell you something. They don't eat cans. It's the labels. And they like the bright-colored ones. I've tried 'em out on tomatter tins. No siree. I told ye I'd got the combination. I took up some left-over Government land, foot-hills as thick with scrub as a new hair-brush, down in Archuleta County. Good soil underneath, and it's goin' to be better.

"I fix up a chunk at a time with hog-fencing and turn in the Angoras. They eat off the brush and fertilize the land. By and bye it'll be first-rate orchard land. Then I'll sell and move on. I'm sticking to the goats."

"Wool valuable?"

"Yep. Good money in the fleeces, and the kids are worth two and a half apiece on the hoof. When you order a young saddle in any first-class chop restaurant in Denver you may think you're eatin' lamb, but you ain't. It's goat, and liable to be from Jimmy Amber's place, Archuleta County. Tenderer the meat the surer it's kid. Yes siree."

With another glance at the elevators, Jimmy gave closer attention. He was becoming really interested.

"My name's Jimmy, too," he said. "Jimmy Hollister. Your goats sound good to me. Does it take much capital to start?"

The goatman gave him a keen glance.

"Mean it?" he asked.

Jimmy nodded. His face reassured the other.

"I should have thought," he said, "that kid gloves was more in your line than fleeces and lamb chops. But I don't know. If you're in earnest I can save you money. It takes the right kind of climate. But it doesn't need much to get a herd. And the land is free. I started on twelve hundred dollars. I'm worth nigh to fifty times that now, though I reckon I don't look it," he added modestly.

Jimmy had an inspiration.

"Know anything about San Juan County, New Mexico?" he asked.

"Yes siree. La Plata County's next to Archuleta, west. San Juan's right under La Plata across the line. And there's Government land there joining to the Navajo Reservation, just right for goats. Most folks don't like Indians for neighbors, but the Navajos are good hombres. I always got along fine with what I met. Tell you what I'll do——"

"Excuse me a minute."

Jimmy had caught sight of the girl leaving the elevator and making for the desk. He sprang up and waited, hat in hand, until she had given up her key. Then he faced her with his nicest bow.

She looked at him with eyes cold with lack of recognition, her eyebrows rising.

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Then she tilted her chin ever so slightly and walked by him to the door.

"Stung!" mentally ejaculated Jimmy.

The clerk was turning to hide a grin.

"That loses you a good cigar," decided Jimmy, retiring in chagrin to the lounge.

"Gel didn't recognize ye?" said the goatman.

His voice held just the proper poise of non-inquisitive consolation or Jimmy, in rising wrath, would have turned on him. Then his anger abated as suddenly as it had mounted.

"I was an ass," he said. "Last time she saw me I was in overalls—and half a shirt."

"Some disguise. Thet's 'Shepherd' Dane's gel."

"Shepherd? Has he got a sheep ranch?"

"He had," chuckled the goatman. "Right here in Denver. But they ran him off. I don't know anything against the gel, but the Shepherd is a bad 'un. Yes, siree. They give him his name because he used to herd the long wools into a little poker game he ran over on Champa Street. Looks like a benevolent old parson. But he's a scalawag from way back. Poker and a cold deck wasn't his only accomplishments.

"He's been a mine faker and claim salter, mixed up in land swindles; any kind of easy-money scheme he could cover up under his gray whiskers. Looks like Joaquin Miller turned saint. Only Joaquin's passed over the range and the Shepherd is still on deck, I reckon, tending sheep, though I ain't seen him lately. They have a reform wave in Denver once in a while, and the last one washed him away. No offense to you, Mister Hollister, or to the gel. She looks like a throw-back.

"Suppose you and I have a drink," he went on in kindly fashion that Jimmy appreciated as a screen for his embarrassment. "Then we can talk a spell about goats. If you go down San Juan way you'll be almost a neighbor and I'd like to see you get started right."

Jimmy went with him, trying to adjust his point of view to a perspective that would show the girl clear and clean of her paternal shortcomings. It wasn't very difficult to do so with himself as special pleader, court and jury, and, as he finished his highball and set down the glass upon the polished bar, he uttered his verdict aloud—

"I don't believe it."

"I don't blame ye," answered the goatman. "It don't seem possible for an ornery critter like a goat to be a God-sent philanthropist, but it's true, every word of it. Land clearance, fertilizer, fleece and flesh, they're the best animal Noah let out of the ark."

CHAPTER IV

THE ELEVEN-THIRTY TRAIN

JIMMY went to bed primed with statistics on goat culture and keen to try his hand at what seemed to offer a solution of his problem of making good on his own account. That his enthusiasm was indissolubly linked with Deborah Dane he did not attempt to deny to himself.

His first waking thought was the remembrance of the fact that this was the day she left for San Juan County. The goatman's crisp estimate of her father had not lowered her in Jimmy's estimation. His sense of chivalry, largely latent until his encounter with Stimpson had shaken it into activity, was developing rapidly.

"No girl," he reasoned as he fussed over the set of his necktie, "could smile like that and be anything but straight. I wonder if she'll smile when I tell her I'm going to settle in San Juan County."

By the time he had dressed he was in friendly mood with all the world. The clerk was forgiven and propitiated with cigars, in return for which he vouchsafed the information that Miss Dane was leaving on the Denver & Rio Grande at eleven-thirty, that the porter was to go for her trunks at ten o'clock and that breakfast had been ordered served in her room at nine.

It was then a few minutes after eight. Jimmy hurried into the dining-room and read between bites the one letter that awaited him, forwarded from Colorado Springs according to the instructions he had left. It was from his father, brief and to the point:

My Dear Son:

I understand that when Jerusalem Copper tumbled, your fortunes fell with it. The only real money is money based on sound financial economies. Perhaps from your new position you may dimly perceive the truth of this. If you do and care to return upon the terms already thrashed out between us, I shall be glad to show you how to handle your prospects.

I have every confidence in your ultimate success.

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I merely wish to save you the hard knocks that my experience coupled with your obedience may successfully divert. A line from you will bring you whatever temporary assistance you may stand in need of. In the meantime I am, as always,

Your affectionate father,
JAMES J. HOLLISTER.

"Good old dad," said Jimmy to himself. "I wish he understood better. Polo ponies, automobiles and aeroplanes have put the younger generation's education on a different footing. Not that I am liable to have anything to do with any of those for a while. But he bred me out-of-doors, and an office to me looks like a duck-pond to a brook trout."

He thrust the letter away for later answering; and, signing his check, fussed for fifteen minutes with the hotel florist before he decided upon a dozen long-stemmed American Beauties. The price staggered even his New York ideas, but he paid it cheerfully. On a visiting-card he added a message beneath his name.

Ex-rider for Jabez Stimpson. I should like to see you before you go south. J. H.

He addressed the label, sent it to her room and haunted the rotunda. The clock behind the desk seemed to alternately dawdle and rush until its hands pointed to eleven o'clock. No boy had earned the dollar that waited for the paging of Jimmy Hollister. At ten minutes past the hour he tackled the clerk again.

"Miss Dane? She's checked out. Her bill was sent up half an hour ago."

"I didn't see her go."

"Went by the Broadway entrance. Taxicabs leave from there."

Jimmy called himself names for the idiocy that had forgotten the hotel was built on a gore.

"Get me a cab on the jump," he said.

In two minutes his chauffeur was risking arrest on his way down Sixteenth Street to the Union Depot.

"I'll pay the fine if you're pinched," said Jimmy. "If not, there's twenty for you to slip into the high and stay there."

It looked as if the girl was purposely eluding him, but Jimmy's jaw was not square for the sole purpose of ornament. If she would have none of him, the goats could go glimmering, he told himself, but he was going to find out where he stood at first hand.

There was a blockade at Wazee Street. A freight-train, in defiance of civic regulations, had come to a standstill across Sixteenth Street. Jimmy chafed as he looked out of his window at the long line of arrested traffic. Then the prospect brightened. Deborah's cab—he called her Deborah to himself already—might be among them. He gave a five-dollar piece to the chauffeur.

"Follow down to the depot," he called as he sped down the array of vehicles.

Close to the freight-train, which the efforts of an indignant traffic policeman had at last split in two, he caught a glint of red hair beneath a tricorne hat through the window of a taxi. Before he could reach the door the cab sped through the opening.

JIMMY sprinted, reaching the entrance to the Union Depot as the tower clock marked twenty-five minutes after the hour, and the girl stepped out of the taxi. A red-cap rushed for her grip as she paid the chauffeur and turned to confront Jimmy with a bouquet of American Beauties in her hand.

"Come on," he said. "We've got to hurry. D. & R. G. southbound, eleven-thirty," he threw at the porter.

"Yassah. Track 6!"

The girl seemed swept off her feet by Jimmy's impetuosity as she hastened along by his side. She gave him a glance of mingled amusement, wonder and approval. Or so Jimmy interpreted it.

"You are persistent," she said. "I have to thank you for these."

"You are elusive," he said. "I've had a hard time catching up to you ever since you drove off in the wagon."

"I've thought about that," she said. "I suppose Stimpson discharged you. I didn't realize it then. I was in a hurry to get my train. Your card said you were riding for him."

Her glance swept curiously over his immaculate attire.

"I quit riding for walking soon after you left," said Jimmy with a grin. "That's all right. Tell you about that later. No time now."

They had reached the gate. The girl produced her ticket.

"Seeing the lady off," said Jimmy.

The gateman appraised him and touched his hat.

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"Right next to the observashun, suh," said the red-cap. "Lady want a seat in the observashun?"

"Right you are, 'Rastus."

With two minutes yet to go he established her on the platform. She looked at him whimsically. Then she smiled.

"Ah!" said Jimmy ecstatically.

Her smile grew more radiant and vanished as the conductor passed them, watch in hand.

"We're starting," she said. "I owe you an apology. Believe me, I didn't mean to be rude. Did you want to say anything to me?" she added half doubtfully.

"Lots," said Jimmy. The train began to move and he threw one leg over the platform. "I'll tell you later."

"Later?"

"Yes. I'm coming down to Aztec in a few days. Going to settle there. I'll look you up."

Apprehension clouded her eyes. She set a gloved hand on Jimmy's arm.

"No," she said. "You mustn't do that. I mean don't try to see me. It's impossible."

A trainman yelled at Jimmy, poised on the outside of the railing.

"That's my middle name," he said. "Good-by. See you later."

He dropped off lightly, waving his hand. She shook her head vigorously at him. Her gaze seemed to hold a positive terror. She cupped her hands and called to him.

"Don't—come—to—Aztec!"

Jimmy shouted back.

"Next week."

He watched the train pass out of the sheds with her warning still ringing in his ears.

"Wild horses wouldn't keep me from Aztec now," he told himself, with his jaw squarer than ever. "She was glad to see me. If she wasn't she ought not to have smiled. And she had my roses, which was mighty decent of her, considering how well they didn't go with her red hair. Fine choice I made."

He appeased the angry gateman with the usual panacea and passed thoughtfully out to where his taxicab awaited him, pondering the earnestness of her last request. A man was swearing at the chauffeur of another cab. Jimmy looked at him casually. It was Stimpson.

The ranch-owner's face was sickly despite its bronze and drawn with what might have been pain, worry or sleeplessness. Jimmy devoutly hoped it was all three. Stimpson failed to see him in his angry expostulation, and Jimmy saw no object in a meeting.

"I'd like to know if he was trying to meet her or making the trip to Aztec," he mused as he got into the cab. "She didn't seem to be expecting any one. Anyhow he missed both his chances. I hope his ribs hurt him."

He thrashed out his decision on the way back to the hotel. His first move was to the writing-room, where he penned a letter that he addressed to New York.

DEAR DAD:

There are other things beside Jerusalem Copper. I am going in for a strictly commercial enterprise that for sheer economics has got a flivver factory lashed to the mast. I've an idea a few hard knocks won't hurt me, and I'll let you know how I come out. Don't worry about me. I'm spelling my wild oats with a "g" prefixed to the last word, and I am still your hopeful and affectionate son.

JIMMY.

"That will keep the governor guessing," he chuckled as he sealed the letter. "Boy!"

"Page Mr. James Amber," he ordered. "Tell him Mr. Hollister is waiting for him to have lunch."

CHAPTER V

SAN JUAN COUNTY

AZTEC is the county-seat of San Juan County, New Mexico. It is six thousand-odd feet skyward in the angle formed by the rivers of La Plata and Las Animas as they tumble through their cañons to join the turbulent San Juan. The full title of the second stream is *El Rio de las Animas Perdidas*——the River of Lost Souls——and Jimmy, after he had surveyed the locality, decided that the name was a good one to give a comprehensive idea of the neighborhood.

He found some Government land on a mesa that lifted to a peak aptly named Diablo, a black mass of burned-out rock jutting from among subordinate hills.

"It looks like the land that God forgot and the devil appropriated," he told himself as he surveyed his little domain after the formalities of "taking up" had been accomplished. He was sweltering beneath the scanty protection of a tent when he

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spoke, and his description was biased. His land was not altogether barren.

Much of it was covered with gramma grass, the ideal of luxury for his goats, some of the hills were fairly well timbered with scrub-oak, juniper and piñon, and the rest furred with sage-brush, greasewood and cactus thickets. But he had found a tarantula on his quilts that morning and seen several rattlesnakes and a Gila monster during his tour of inspection.

It was the utter loneliness of the place that oppressed him. His nearest and only neighbors lay beyond a deep and narrow cañon, its bottom a dry watercourse, its sides honeycombed with ancient cliff-dwellings; the country of a long-departed race.

It was the identity of the neighbor that had decided him upon his location. It was Richard Dane, the Shepherd of the Long Wools and owner of the Curly O ranch.

"It's no place for a white man, let alone a white girl," muttered Jimmy, who was forming the habit of talking to himself. "What in thunder a bustling old crook like the Shepherd finds in a dump like this is beyond me. The 'stuff' he is sending up to Stimpson must be rich. It's a rotten shame to bury Deborah in such a hole."

He had seen nothing of her nor of any of the denizens of the Curly O. He had not yet invaded the ranch. From his side of the cañon he could see only the thin line of the barbed-wire fence against the sky. The buildings were hidden in some fold of the hills and so far he had seen no stock. In Aztec he had gleaned little information.

"A rum old cuss who knows as much about cattle as a sidewinder does about playin' the mouth-organ," summed up one informant. There was a brother, he learned and three other men.

Jimmy had decided not to force a meeting. If there was any reason for the girl's attitude against his coming to San Juan County, he did not want to unduly distress her, and he was young enough to believe in a lucky chance ultimately bringing her in his path.

His Angoras were not due from Albuquerque for several uncertain days of freight-time reckoning, and in the meantime he had to secure a herder who knew more of the ways of goats than he did. The goatman, who had traveled with him as far as Durango Junction, had advised him to secure a *mestizo*, or halfbreed Indian, but so far he had not been able to find one who was not incurably afflicted with a combination of drunkenness and laziness.

The fence along the brink of the cañon seemed unnecessary. Unless the steers were given to suicide, the precipice itself appeared to be sufficient barrier for its length. It was the natural line between Jimmy's land and that of his neighbor. He was not sure to whom the cañon belonged. As it was largely air space, it might be considered neutral. The deep wedge-shaped rift ended where a rough trail led to the arid stream bed, near the northern limit of both holdings.

So far he had not explored it. It had been too hot to do anything but practise with his automatic pistol, redeemed from the stingy pawnbroker in Colorado Springs. He found that a steady nerve and a good eye rapidly aided him to get the hand of the weapon. The day he succeeded in potting two prairie dogs in succession on the top of their mounds he felt he had graduated.

In sheer desperation he decided to descend into the cañon and explore some of the cliff-dwellings. He left his pony grazing, hobbled in a grassy hollow, by the little spring that was one of his land's most valuable possessions, and made his way on foot to the head of the cleft, wishing to spare his mount the hard scramble down the trail, after a morning's ride to Aztec and back again, in the vain search for a helper.

He repented his generosity several times before he reached the grateful shade of the cañon walls, but the Hollister strain of determination and endurance held him to his quest.

THE name of the time-worn corridor of the mountains was Turquoise Cañon, named, Jimmy learned, from the legend of an ancient Indian mine rich in free gold found in the turquoise matrix. Rumor had it that the Navajos, herded in their near-by reservation, still guarded jealously the secret of the gold they could no longer exploit nor would suffer their white conquerors to enjoy.

There were grisly tales current of expeditons of less settled days that had resulted in disaster, the search ending with the flight of Indian arrows and the crunching of bones by the coyotes. No one had found

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the old working. The vague hope of discovery gave a needed zest to Jimmy's toilsome expedition. It would be a quicker way of getting rich than goat-raising, he felt, wishing he had that animal's facility of climbing as he scrambled down the narrow track.

The thought struck him that Deborah's father might have discovered the mine, but he could see no reason for secrecy unless it was fear of the Indians. The reservation was close by. The San Juan River formed a part of its border just west of where the La Plata flowed in. But the Navajos were pacific and well guarded. It was more likely, he decided, that there was some prior claim, Governmental or part of the Indian treaty, that Dane was ignoring.

The trail wound about shoulders of eroded lava, blocks of which strewed the slopes in weird shapes that suggested crouching monsters, giant skulls and mammoth tortoises. Spanish bayonet and stunted cactus provided the only vegetation. Half the eastern wall was a vivid glare of burnt orange with violent purple shadows marking fissure and buttress. The western wall was a cooler gray, its formation outlined in deeper tone. The dry watercourse at the bottom showed as if gazed at through violet glass.

The openings of the cliff-dwellings showed like black, yawning gullets. Tumbling, crumbling walls of square chambers and towers still remained upon platforms beneath overhanging ledges. Some of the ancient habitations were perched or inset half-way up the cliff. Nearly all were on the eastern side. Halting midway, Jimmy could trace indications of perilous trails between the fortress homes, though most of them, he decided, could only have been reached by long-ago-rotted ladders.

He heard the sudden click of a horse's shoe against a stone. Some one was coming up the trail. Where he stood it was a narrow path worn from the almost vertical face of the wall. He scrambled up to a projecting boulder to give the climbers right of way.

A man on a roan horse that panted heavily beneath heat and weight came into view. Beyond the sharp sound of the shoe progress had been noiseless in the thick dust of the trail until the horse's breathing became manifest. Behind the first came three others.

The leader was a bull-necked young giant, his sun-crisped face powdered with dust. Two others followed closely, tanned, unshaven and unkempt. Some distance behind toiled a pinto pony bearing a man that Jimmy instantly placed as Shepherd Dane. His long, white beard wagged wearily to the horn of his saddle, his heavy, shapeless body, sagged to the jerk of the laboring beast.

The cavalcade was abreast of Jimmy before they noticed him. The leader bestowed upon him a glance of astonished anger, and the rest followed suit. Only the Shepherd answered Jimmy's friendly hail.

"There's nothing down there worth looking at, stranger," he said. "No water. Just the bare bones of rocks, and rattlesnakes by the million."

"That why you're coming out?" asked Jimmy cheerfully.

The younger man looked at him morosely, opened his lips to speak and changed his mind. The four passed slowly up the trail, turned a corner and were lost to view.

"Nice, social crowd," commented Jimmy. "Ride like a lot of shoe-clerks, and guns enough for a landing party. So that's the Shepherd! And the amiable chap in front was her brother, I imagine. She seems to have the only smile in the family. They seem awful stingy with their cañon. But they didn't say they owned it. I'm going down."

The farther Jimmy explored the floor of the cañon the less became his interest in cliff-dwellings and in the lost Indian mine-workings. The transparent shadow screen that had made the cañon floor look so comparatively cool from above, proved utterly deceptive. He seemed to be walking on the bed of a recently drawn furnace.

He explored one or two of the lower runs and was rewarded by the discovery of some broken pottery. There were no indications of water, and that in his canteen was more than tepid when he tried to assuage a swiftly increasing thirst. He decided that, unless unusual temptation offered, he would henceforth leave Turquoise Cañon to the rattlesnakes the Shepherd had mentioned. So far Jimmy had not seen any, but he did not doubt their presence on their basking ledges.

The stony bottom held no regular trail to his untrained eye nor could he trace the

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movement of the Curly O quartet. The cañon maintained its deep and narrow formation for several miles before it widened out with lowering cliffs on the La Plata watershed.

It was probable, thought Jimmy, that they used the way they had come up out of the cañon as entrance also. It was no pleasure trip and only a strong incentive could prompt an excursion in the scorching defile.

Jimmy's concern in that incentive waned as the heat seemed to wax. He turned midway to a three-storied dwelling that had tempted search and started back. The vicious *whir-r-r* of a rattlesnake, close to his right, startled him. He whirled to face his danger and saw the lower half of a naked leg, covered with leathery brown skin, attenuated so that the tendons showed plainly, flexed from knee to footsole between two boulders.

At the first glimpse he thought it was the leg of a dead man, or that of a mummy dragged from a cave by some sacrilegious marauder. Then it twitched as the snake's warning sounded once again. Apparently the reptile was close to the body.

JIMMY cautiously mounted the rocks. Wedged between them lay the body of an old Indian, clad only in a breech-clout. His coarse iron-gray hair, reaching to his shoulders, was matted with blood above one temple. On a side ledge of one of the boulders, level with the man's thigh, was coiled the largest rattlesnake that Jimmy had ever seen. Its girth was as great as that of the Indian's leg and its blunt, bony head, shaped like a wedge, was elevated on a scaly length that held it in a menacing poise.

A forked tongue flickered from its mouth. Its beady eyes seemed covered with a film and it turned its head uneasily from side to side. At his footfall it struck, flinging its jaws, not at him, but at the Indian. As it recoiled Jimmy saw plainly the dark punctures of its fangs in the brown flesh. He fired at the upraised head and the bullet smashed it, spattering the boulder with blood and lead. The writhing stump of the neck spurted blood and the great body, five feet in length, threw itself in its convulsions upon that of the Indian.

Jerking it away and flinging the twisting bulk far across the cañon, Jimmy knelt beside the prostrate man, whose eyes were open. The echoing crash of the heavy automatic, coupled with the shock of the snake-bite, had brought him back from an unconsciousness, the source of which was indicated by the wound at his temple.

He looked with a calm unwondering gaze at Jimmy, speaking in strange syllables. These he changed for fairly fluent Spanish.

"*Si*," said Jimmy. "*Yo hablo Mexicano.*"

A Summer's cruise in the West Indies had given him a working knowledge of Spanish and he had little difficulty in establishing an understanding.

"The snake has bitten you," he said. "We must do something for it."

"It is no use, señor. That was the third time. The snake must have been blind and soon to lose its skin, for it struck the first time without warning. I shall die. I thank you, señor, but it is of no use."

Horrified, Jimmy noticed for the first time how greatly swollen one leg already was in comparison to the other. The man seemed doomed but he took his neckerchief, a stone and a stick and attempted a tourniquet.

"I shall die, señor, unless I could drink the *yerba buena*. And it grows only on the top of the cliff."

"What is it like?" asked Jimmy. "I'll get you some."

The Indian feebly shook his head.

"It is much like many others. Unless I showed you—I know where it grows—at the head of the cañon—but I could not tell you so that you could find it. Give me instead a drink of water—if you have it."

The sentences were jerky. The man was succumbing to the narcosis of the virus. Jimmy put his canteen to the cracking lips and looked about him despairingly. He could not let the man die without some supreme effort.

The Indian was emaciated from age and of small stature. Jimmy hastily guessed his weight at under a hundred and thirty pounds, sixty less than his own muscular heft.

He stooped and picked up the Indian, now rapidly becoming comatose. The body was lighter even than he imagined. But it was a long way to the top of the cañon with a narrow path on the steep pitch for the final pull. Jimmy set his jaw and packed his burden at an arm-carry until he reached the foot of the trail.

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Then he set down the limp body on its face, stepped astride it, lifted it to its knees and feet and, at last, the sweat dripping from him, held the Indian across his back in the "fireman's lift," his right arm passing between the Indian's legs slung across his right shoulder, his hand grasping the other's right wrist; a trick he had learned on camping trips.

It was an arduous task he had given himself and it seemed a useless one, but he persevered. His head was splitting, his throbbing pulses created a roaring in his ears and he tottered up the last few yards of the ascent to the rim and dropped exhausted and almost as lifeless as his burden.

Jimmy forced himself back to energy. The tourniquet had shifted. He sought for the main artery of the thigh and, pressing hard to the bone, found it faintly pulsating. He readjusted the bandage with the stone against the artery and tried desperately to shake the dying man back to consciousness.

Had it been a white man he would have failed, but the Indian's spark of vitality was stubborn and the coordination of brain and body instinctive and apt. Jimmy saw a gleam of intelligence between the slowly lifting lids.

"The *yerba buena*. Where?"

He repeated the syllables distinctly.

"Raise me."

He held the Indian in a sitting posture while the latter's eyes feebly roved over the ground, struggling to retain their power.

"There, by the big stone," he muttered.

Jimmy followed his fading glance and bore him swiftly to the boulder. The ground was densely matted with small-leaved herbage. It seemed all alike to Jimmy's eyes, but the Indian, scraping aside the growth with feeble, clawlike hands, selected some of the fleshy foliage and stuffed his mouth with it, chewing it, swallowing the juice and ejecting the pulpy residue.

"Take plenty in plenty water and boil," he said. "Perhaps—if it is not too late."

He fell back in a strangling vomit. Jimmy collected the rest of the herb, a double handful of clammy leaves and stems from which dripped a milky, sticky juice, and ran at the best pace he could muster to his tent.

He grabbed a saucepan and his matches, started a fire and thrust the utensil into the flames that he fed with dried greasewood until they roared, while he stirred the brew. It boiled to scum, and he caught it up and hurried back, fearful of spilling a drop, unable to use his pony's speed.

The Indian lay quiet, arms outstretched, his leg terribly swollen below the tourniquet. To remove the bandage was to let the poison enter the body, to leave it threatened mortification. The man seemed practically dead and Jimmy decided upon desperate means and left the bandage undisturbed. He managed to part the clenched teeth with his knife-blade and poured some of the hot liquid into the mouth, holding the nostrils and stroking the throat to ensure swallowing.

With a gurgling contraction some of it disappeared, and he tried it again. Before half of the brew was gone the Indian's body was twisted in convulsions that threatened to tear him apart, followed by violent retching and vomiting that continued for half an hour and left him limp and soggy with perspiration.

"I shall live now, señor," he said. "In a little while I will drink the rest and tomorrow I shall be well again. I am your servant. My head is beneath your foot."

His eyes reinforced the gratitude of his speech. He still appeared too exhausted for movement and Jimmy shifted him to the shadow side of the boulder.

"I am going to bring my pony," he said. "We'll get you to the tent somehow. Then you can rest all you want to."

With a low "*Si*," of satisfaction, the Indian relaxed. The swelling in the leg appeared less puffy, and Jimmy severed the tourniquet, which had sunk deep into flesh.

"I suppose," thought Jimmy, as he walked back for the horse, "that, having rescued the mysterious barbarian he should reveal to me the secret of the mine and I should become a trillionaire overnight and bear off the imprisoned princess to a happy-ever-after marriage."

While he laughed at his own conceit, the thought shifted to a soberer investigation of his feelings.

"Am I really in love?" he asked himself. "Have I come down here for goats or matrimony?"

He gave up the attempt at self-analysis after a little while. Thus far he had acted upon impulse and he was disposed to let himself still drift upon whatever tide Fortune

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was sending him. In his inexperience he decided that he could hardly be in love with a girl to whom he had only spoken twice, not understanding that the facts that he had championed her and that she had forbidden him to follow her provided a combination that was one of Cupid's most effective coups.

"I shall be lucky if my Indian turns out to know anything about goats," was his final summing-up after he had got his patient comfortable under canvas.

He was wearied to the last of his own strength when he finally stretched out beneath the stars, curled up in a blanket among the sage clumps.

CHAPTER VI

TEZAH

THE next morning Jimmy tended his Indian guest as best he could. The swollen leg was half way to normal again, and Jimmy persuaded him to swallow some canned soup.

"My name is Tezah," said the Indian. "And I shall not forget, señor."

Beyond the one sentence, he was taciturn, lapsing into heavy dozes from which he awoke drenched with sweat, and thirsty.

In midmorning a man rode up from Aztec. The goats had arrived, a hundred in the herd, most of them expectant of increase. They were then on the way. Jimmy set a cup of water by Tezah's head, explained matters to him and departed to look after his stock. He had already surrounded ten acres of heavy brush with his hog-fencing and into this inclosure, three hours later, he turned the animals with the pleasant thrill of ownership.

"A nice lot," said the man who had first ridden up as they watched the goats turn to in an endeavor to appease their Angoran appetites. "I wish you luck. I see you've got the chief inside your tent."

"The chief?"

"So he claims. Great old character, Tezah! From the way the other Indjuns treat him, I guess he's right. He lives with the Pueblo tribes, here and there. They think a lot of him and his story-tellin', but he don't belong to them. He ain't Navajo or South Ute, so he's free of the reservation. And he ain't Zuñi, though they say he talks their lingo. Is he goin' to herd for ye?"

"I don't know. He was bitten by a rattler and I found him."

Jimmy was not given to chant his own achievements.

"You're lucky if you get him," said the man. "Bein' a chief, he may be above herdin' goats, but you'll find he knows how to handle 'em. Them and sheep come natural to the Injuns hereabouts. So long. I've got to be beatin' it back to town."

When Jimmy went into his tent he found Tezah sitting up.

"Señor, your goats have come," he said. "I will be your herder."

"But they tell me you're a chief," said Jimmy.

Tezah nodded.

"I am," he said gravely. "Chief of the Yojillas. Once the cañon belonged to our tribe. But the Pueblo people became too powerful and they drove us out. That was very long ago. And now, of all the Yojillas, I am the last. Yet if the tribe still flourished I would be their chief.

"So, when the white men ordered me from the cañon where all my people have lived and died and where their bones lie in the caves, I would not go. For it was the seventh moon of the year and I had come to worship the Aco."

He translated the Indian word into its Spanish equivalents, the "white stone."

"Long ago, soon after the earth split and made the cañon," he went on, "my people came from a land far to the south and east. There was famine there and sickness so that except the very strong nearly all the tribe died. The priests prayed to Quetzal and Quetzal came and stood upon a burning mountain and threw the Aco toward the western sun.

"Where the Aco rested, we were to dwell. So the priests found the Aco where it had sunk into the cliff and knew that was the place appointed by Quetzal. The tribe grew strong and well and great in number. A stream flowed between the cliffs and there were trees and grass in those days. Also we found much gold. There is much there today but none can find it.

"Then, at last, because we lived too easily and forgot how to fight, the Pueblo people drove us out. But, before we left, the priests and old men toiled while the rest fought, and hid the gold. They too were killed but not until they had done their work. One was left and he fled with a few

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of the Yojillas to a refuge in the desert. Now am I the only one of all my people.

"When I told the white men that I worshiped the Aco they laughed and one struck me with his gun so that I fell. You know the rest, señor. My head is beneath your foot."

"Perhaps they have found the gold," said Jimmy.

"No señor. For the father of my father saw the priest who fled. That was when he was very young and the priest very old. And the priest told him that the gold would never be found by those who sought for it and not until the Aco fell would any one find it. It was he who gave the secret of the *yerba buena*. Also he told the father of my father that he was Chief of all the Yojillas and he gave him this. It is yours, señor."

Tezah produced a flat fragment of turquoise matrix, bluish-green in color, heavily starred with free gold. Jimmy took it, examined it and gave it back.

"You keep it," he said. "And see here, about the goats——"

He hesitated. There was a dignity about the old man that made the question of wages seem incongruous.

"I'll be glad to have you help me. Suppose you give me your advice and help and take, say one-fifth of the kids for your share. I don't know much about how fast they breed but I should think that was fair."

"Señor," said Tezah. "I am an old man. Of what use are kids or gold to me? I do not wish to give gifts to the maidens nor to buy them for myself. Food and a fire, a blanket and a friend are all I need. And not those for nothing. In two days I shall stand. Then I shall make your herd fat and heavy of fleece and many as the rocks in the cañon."

"So be it," said Jimmy, simply, and stretched out his fingers for the handshake of compact.

Jimmy had a hundred occasions within the next few days to be thankful to Tezah. His ewes were kidding and many of the highbred Angoras were inclined to aristocratically ignore their maternal functions. As he marveled at the old chief's control of the wayward brutes he wondered what he would have done without him.

Night times they shared the tobacco that the other Jimmy and goatman had proclaimed good and, as the smoke puffs floated upward in the still air, fragrant with herbs, the starry sky brooding above the silent purple hills about them, the soft bleat of the contented herd sounding occasionally, Jimmy, listening to the legends that Tezah told, felt the bond of humanity grow tense and the customs and conventions of the present-day world very far away. It was as if he sat in the quiet desert at the feet of a sage and learned to see things simply and at just the true values of humanity.

He had not forgotten the girl. Tezah was often silent, wrapped in the melancholy but prideful past and then Jimmy's thoughts wandered, as the thoughts of young men will, to the one woman who had stirred him out of the circle of his own doings.

He resolved at last to pay a visit to the Curly O, persuading himself that the act would be a neighborly one. To make the excuse more sufficient he killed a couple of young kids and dressed them to exchange for a quarter of beef or a side of veal. Ostensibly, at least, the owner of the Curly O was a cattleman. The request would be a natural one.

CHAPTER VII

THE CURLY O

JIMMY rode around the head of Turquoise Cañon in the early morning, his kids slung across his saddle. He found a horse trail and traced it to a gate rudely fashioned of barbed wire and a pole looped to a fence post, following the path upon the other side through a tract of sage. He passed a score of cattle at a muddy waterhole but saw no other signs of stock.

The trail led diagonally away from the cañon toward two buttes, eroded into mushroom form by the lathe of wind and flood, and between them he caught sight of the long low building of the Curly O headquarters. The ranch-house was built of adobe brick with a brush thatch. Between the two stories projected the corrugated iron roof of a veranda that surrounded it on three sides. A fence of wire formed an enclosure about the house and a barn. Within it a straggling vegetable garden showed signs of intermittent culture.

Three men were sprawled out on chairs by the steps. A hound bayed and ran toward the gate as Jimmy rode up and dismounted leaving the pony's reins at trail.

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As he walked up to the house with the kids on his shoulder the dog sniffed around him, leaping upward at the meat.

The men laughed, but made no motion of reception. Jimmy saw a clothes-line at the side of the house on which hung a print gown and some aprons. His heart gave a sudden leap at the evidence of the girl's presence. He had begun to wonder if she was still there and the swift pleasure of reassurance stripped him of any lingering delusions as to the purpose of his visit or the real reason for his establishment of the Capricorn ranch, as he had named his holding.

Stopping at the foot of the steps he addressed the bull-necked man who had led the little cavalcade out of the cañon. His wrath was slowly rising at the derisive attitude of the men on the porch who affected to ignore his existence, but he held it in control.

"I thought you might want to trade beef or veal for a couple of young kids," said Jimmy in a voice he strove to hold casual, laying the carcasses across the railing of the steps and holding the gaze of the man he addressed.

The latter got up leisurely and descended to Jimmy's level. He was dressed in high boots and overalls with a flannel shirt open at the neck and exposing a hairy chest. His sleeves were rolled up to the elbows and Jimmy noted the wonderful development of his upper body.

"That chap would make a star wrestler," he thought, as he waited for the other to speak.

"Likely looking flesh," said the man, poking the kids. "I'm sick of beef myself. —oh, dad!" he called, as he turned toward the house.

"I'm Jimmy Hollister. I'm raising goats across the cañon. Your name is Dane, isn't it?"

"That's my name. Here's dad. He'll talk with you."

So this was Deborah's brother—a surly, swaggering sort, Jimmy decided, puzzled as to whether his appeal to his father was born of filial duty or lazy dulness.

The door opened and the figure of the owner of the Curly O appeared, patriarchal and benevolent, dressed in gray tweeds, his long white beard well combed.

"Chap we met coming out of the cañon t'other day. Name of Hollister," said the younger Dane. "He's raising goats. Wants to trade for beef. How about it?"

Jimmy, conscious of the close scrutiny of the old man, remained with one foot on the first step, standing at ease. He nodded at the cursory introduction.

"Name of Hollister?" said Dane. "A young man raising goats. Quite pastoral. Jerry, get a quarter of beef."

One of the sitters stirred himself and vanished 'round the back of the house. Jimmy wondered where the girl was.

"You'll find them good eating," he said pleasantly. "I'd like to trade this way every little while."

"Ah! You would. Well, I see no objection to that. Of the name of Hollister? And you are raising goats? You should do well with them, if you give the business your close attention."

Jimmy felt that he was being played with by the bland old reprobate. He had figured on the chance of Stimpson having written about him and dismissed it. Stimpson had no reason to think that he was going down to San Juan County. The girl might have mentioned him.

If he was to admit that he had worked for the man he would be either expected to bear a message showing him to be in some fashion in Stimpson's confidence or he would be suspected as a spy, unless—unless they guessed the real attraction.

The man returned with the quarter of beef, clumsily butchered with the hide on, far from being the work of expert or even accustomed hands. Meanwhile, Jimmy sensed the strain of the situation.

The suave Shepherd had something up his sleeve, as perhaps he used to keep his winning cards, and the others regarded him with covert curiosity as of one in an inimical position who is presently to be exposed. Jimmy stood the chafe equably until he took up his beef and was ready to leave.

"Miss Dane well?" he asked.

"So!" The old man's sibillant exclamation was like the hiss of a freshly lit fuse. "You have met my daughter?"

"Yes. In Denver, At the Brown Palace Hotel."

Shepherd Dane's mild blue eyes concentrated themselves on his visitor. His son uttered a short derisive laugh. The old man's voice purred.

"In Denver. At the Brown Palace. And you told her you were raising goats in San Juan County. Quite a coincidence."

He began to stroke his beard and the two

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men sauntered off the porch. The son edged nearer to Jimmy who, turning at the motion, caught a glare of ferocity in the other's eyes.

"I trust you were properly introduced," went on the Shepherd. "A girl who travels alone is subject to many annoyances. Even here—" his voice grew suddenly hard—"she has to put up with many impertinences."

There was a snicker from behind Jimmy. One of the men who had left the porch was lolling at the gate of the enclosure, his gun hitched 'round so that it lay on his hip ready to the fingers that tapped its butt. Another stood by Jimmy's pony. Neither made any effort to hide their smiles. They were baiting him, he determined, waiting for him to give them provocation.

"I've got to be getting back," he said. "My man is waiting for me to work on a fence. I can assure you, Mr. Dane, that I have not intended any annoyance to Miss Dane. She would tell you that."

He saw the change he had hoped for in the announcement of his helper. The Shepherd ceased to stroke his beard, his son thrust his hands into his pockets with a subdued growl.

"So you have a man with you?" said Dane. "Then you must not keep him waiting. Let me give you a little advice. The more time you give to your chosen avocation the better it will succeed. Moreover the air on this side of the cañon is distinctly unhealthy for those bred in the city. Also that of the cañon itself."

"Is the cañon on your property?" asked Jimmy.

He held the question to a show of civility but young Dane suddenly flared up.

"You'll find out if you don't keep away from it!" he blurted out. "You might as well know first as last that we don't propose to have any tenderfeet sneaking 'round our concerns. You and your goat-ranch! Get back and play with your kids where you belong, you dude!"

Jimmy's eyes flashed and he swung back a ready fist. The old man came down the steps with surprising alacrity.

"Gently, son," he said. "We've given him the advice. I'm sure he'll take it. An ounce of advice, well taken, prevents a lot of trouble in case action becomes necessary. Good morning. You're forgetting your beef."

Jimmy fought hard against the impulse to hurl the mass of raw flesh into the jeering and hostile face of the younger Dane. To deliberately provoke a fight would be equivalent to suicide with the odds against him and he reluctantly choked down his ire, picked up the quarter and walked to the gate, fastening the beef to his saddle while the others watched his every move.

As he rode off he heard their laughter but kept his pony's steady lope toward his own property.

"The old man doesn't want to raise a fuss," he reflected. "But I believe they'd have jumped me if I hadn't given them the idea some one knew where I was. Confound their beef. I'd like to ram it down their throats. I hope the kid flesh chokes them instead."

He rode on steadily until he dismounted to pass through the gate.

"But I'm going to see Deborah," he said aloud as he remounted. "There's a mystery somewhere and there's something crooked about it. If she's in the crook it's because she can't get out of it. And I'm going to help her."

CHAPTER VIII

THE PATERAN

WITH Tezah's expert assistance the work on the Capricorn goat-ranch became almost automatic after the kidding season was well over. In ten-acre lots the goats ate off the brush and passed on leaving the earth cleared and fertilized. The soil was light and Jimmy acquired a plow and harrow to which he attached the pony.

The holding began to take on the look of improved ground and he was justly proud of its appreciated value. The spring, he found, was supplied by several water veins which could be developed and an irrigating system later judiciously applied to the land.

Tezah worked with a will, starting a vegetable garden by the spring, seemingly absorbed in the welfare of the undertaking. But there were many days when Jimmy had literally nothing that he could do and he used them to ride about the country. The rare, invigorating air, the clean life, the sense of self-mastery and achievement, combined to give him a feeling of vigor and confidence that he had never known before.

The long hours that might have led to

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laziness in a less vigorous personality inspired him with the power to think. His previous reliance on his own powers he now gaged as having been cocksureness. He gained something from the old chieftain's philosophy. He was maturing.

The problem of Deborah Dane he realized as a serious one. There were four men against him and his determination to free the girl from her surroundings. His belief in her freedom from any voluntary participation in the crooked doings of the Curly O never wavered. That these doings were criminal he felt assured. The Shepherd was not burying himself in such a country from choice. And his communication with the outer world through his daughter would leave too broad a trail if he was in hiding. Tying all this up with the warning to keep clear of the cañon, convinced Jimmy that there was a deposit of some kind in the ravine that was being surreptitiously and illegally exploited.

He wondered if it was radium. He vaguely recollected some rumor or written statement about the Government having withdrawn its mining from the mineral rights granted the public in certain States. Constantly he tried to evolve some means of communication with Deborah Dane. The next time he would clear up matters. He did not believe she was averse to him and her constant presence in his thoughts and plans had made her seem very real and necessary in his existence.

Monte Diablo, the volcanic upthrust that obtruded at the highest point in the neighborhood, possessed a natural trail that led to a ledge close to the top from which a wonderful view of the country stretched out to immense distances where far-off ranges lay clear in the crystalline atmosphere. The rock was west of the holdings of both the Curly O and the Capricorn Ranch and Jimmy, having once explored it, made it the usual object of his solitary expeditions, climbing to the ledge and leaving his pony to graze at Diablo's foot.

On his fourth trip his mount nickered, pricking up its ears as they neared the great chimney. A pinto horse was feeding on the turf and herbage. Jimmy rode up, loosening the automatic that he now carried in a holster at his belt which was always well supplied with extra clips for practise or more practical use against the coyotes that Tezah warned him would sooner or later attack his flock, unless discouraged.

Glancing upward he caught the flutter of a disappearing skirt. He experienced again the sensation of his heart performing a somersault. Fortune had favored him. It was Deborah Dane and in a place where she could not elude him.

He left the two ponies to make acquaintance and briskly climbed to the ledge. The girl was sitting on a loose fragment, gazing into space. She turned as he reached her level and he saw that she had been crying, though all superficial traces of her tears had been wiped away.

Eager desire to take her in his arms and comfort her took forcible and instant possession of him, so fiercely that he found himself trembling at its intensity and his repression. Something of the impulse communicated itself to the girl for her frank look changed to a troubled one and she shifted uneasily.

Jimmy got a grip on himself and stayed motionless.

"Peach of a view, isn't it?" he said. His voice wobbled a trifle and he steadied it. "I often come up here," he went on. "Do you? I thought I was the original Cortez of this section. You know:

> Cortez and his men
> On a wild peak in Darien

discovering the Pacific and all that sort of thing."

The smile that came to her face was wan and forced, the very ghost of the radiance that he had once seen illumine it, Jimmy thought.

"I used to come here a good deal, once," she said. "But not for a long time until now."

"I'm glad you did," said Jimmy.

He had recovered his poise and started straight for the point.

"You told me not to come to Aztec," he said. "I did and I'm settled across the cañon, raising goats. I called at your place the other day and they weren't overcordial, particularly when I inquired after you. What I want to know is, first, am I as objectionable to you as to the rest of the family? Because, if I'm not I don't give a hang about the whole outfit, having met you again. Am I?"

"No." The word came faintly but she emphasized it with a little shake of her head.

"Good news. Next, seeing we are going to be friends, what's the trouble?

"I don't want to breeze into your private

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affairs," he went on as she remained silent. "If everything's all right just say so and I'll know that I'm an imaginative and inquisitive ass. But that isn't going to stop me from seeing you. You were crying before I came up," he said, sitting down beside her. "You're not the kind of a girl to cry for nothing. I saw that at Stimpson's. Won't you let me help you?"

THE sincerity of his manhood rang clearly in his speech. Her eyes met his and stayed there for a moment and once more the bridge of understanding and liking was established between them. Jimmy had put out his hand and she clasped it. Some mysterious current sprang into existence from the contact, blending their beings into the mutual fellowship of mated maid and man. It held them silent for a while. Then Deborah Dane broke it with a little sigh.

"You can not help me now," she said. "To try would be dangerous for you and would do me no good. I am in trouble but much of it is, perhaps, imaginary. I have been very lonely—" she smiled at him as she used the past tense—"and there are things going on that I do not understand, things that I am afraid to try to find out about—because——"

"Because they affect your father and your brother—and yourself?" asked Jimmy as she faltered.

She nodded.

"They have acted strangely of late. Father has been very nervous and irritated. My brother is—different. I have never been very much with them until we came down here. We have seldom lived long in one place, except in Denver. Father had many friends that he did not allow me to see. He was seldom home.

"He was always kind and, when we had money, generous. Sometimes we had plenty and then we would be very poor again. Often that, since I came back from school.

"You heard what Stimpson said to me."

She faced Jimmy squarely, her face flushed but her eyes steady.

"He said that my father had promised I should marry him. I did not believe it but he—he does not deny it. Stimpson has some hold over him, of course. He told me that if I married Stimpson it would get him out of difficulties that he could see no other way of freeing himself—and us—from.

"My brother heard us talking and he was furious. I think they would have fought about it if I had not separated them. That was why my father did not tell me of Stimpson's letter and his own promise. He was afraid of my brother and afraid of Stimpson. And he is not a man who is easily cowed. One thing is settled. I am not to go to Stimpson any more.

"But I hear them quarreling every night after I have gone up-stairs. Some days they snarl at each other like strange dogs. It is like living on the brink of a volcano. Sometime there is going to be an eruption.

"They quarreled about you, with dad, for letting you get away. Stimpson wrote about a man he had employed who had found out something. How much he was not sure. He did not mention your name but they suspect you are the same one. Since you said you met me in Denver they have watched me more closely. They follow me sometimes with field-glasses. One of them watches from the top of one of the buttes.

"Sometimes I have thought dad was going to tell me what it is all about but was afraid to. Whenever I have gone to Stimpson's I have taken some heavy boxes in my trunk. I believe there is gold in them and that it comes from the cañon. But there's some mystery about it and I think—I am afraid that it does not really belong to them."

Her face worked pitifully and Jimmy looked away.

"If I can help you," he said, "will you let me know?"

"If I am able to. They sent me up-stairs when they saw you coming the other day. I could see you through my window and I was afraid you would be hurt."

Jimmy's spirit grew stout within him and a glow warmed him from crown to sole. To have a girl—the girl—be afraid for you, was to reduce the cause of fear to a minimum.

"If we are once seen together," she said, "they will keep me close to the ranch-house."

"Then we'll have to do that only when it's absolutely necessary."

Jimmy's voice held a doleful note that seemed to act paradoxically upon the girl for she smiled at him and he filed the smile for future recollection. He was beginning to count those swift illuminations that

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transformed her from a normal red-headed girl into a radiant, aureoled being, eminently vital and kindly.

"You can let me know how things are," he said. "I've thought it all out. Now that I've met you, it's easy. We'll make a pateran."

She looked puzzled. Jimmy explained.

"A pateran is a token used by the gipsy folk. Some combination of twigs dropped in a trail to show which way one has gone or leave a message. They look like wind-blown twigs to the ordinary eye. We can take a spray of scrub-oak with the cups on it and a sprig of pine! Twist the two together and let the pateran fall.

"If the acorns are in the cups I shall know all's well. If they are out, that you need me. Drop them somewhere on the trail between your line fence and Diablo here and I'll find them. I'll return the message in another place so you'll know I've got it."

"I understand."

"And here's another plan."

Jimmy produced a gold-cased pencil that was attached to his watch-chain and found an envelope. On the blank side of the back he rapidly set down a series of dots and dashes with the symbols of the alphabet opposite them.

"This is the International or Continental Morse Code," he said. "I used to have a yacht once with wireless on it and I learned how to send and receive messages."

He looked at her in the sudden thought that she knew nothing of him beyond the fact that he had been a rider for Stimpson and was now a breeder of Angoras. She nodded.

"I did not suppose you had always done this sort of thing," she said.

"I'm trying to make good on my own account," said Jimmy. "I am not a remittance man or a ne'er-do-well exactly. But I started out to show my father that I could get along on my own hook and, while I haven't made any great success of it so far, I'm getting along. I'll tell you all about it, some day."

"I should love to hear it," she said. "What am I to do with this?"

"Learn it. Tap it out whenever you are by yourself. You can see the sun set behind Diablo from your house?"

"Yes. I often watch it."

"The angle of difference between your view-point and my tent can be only a few minutes. I shall be at the corner of your line fence for half an hour every night at sundown. If you want to send me a message tap it out on the barbed wire. The top strand seems taut. Don't use it too often as they might detect it and suspect something. There are some abbreviations at the end of the code. I shall be there every evening."

"You are awfully good to me," she said.

"I want to be," answered Jimmy simply.

"But you don't know anything about me. I don't know much about myself. I'm almost afraid to find out."

Jimmy smiled.

"What you find out isn't going to make any difference to me."

She rose to her feet with a light in her eyes that sent the glow tingling through him again.

"I hope it isn't. I've got to be going. They might take a notion to look for me. I'll learn the code and I'll not forget about the paterans. Good-by."

He followed her down the trail and set his hand for her footmount, watching her as she rode away. Then he apostrophized his pony.

"Solo, you solemn-faced equine, if any one had told me or any of our crowd that Jimmy Hollister would be riding 'round looking for sprays of scrub-oak and pine, or waiting every night for a barbed-wire-ophone message from a girl, they would think the aforesaid Jimmy Hollister a quixotic chump who had suddenly gone crazy.

"But I'm not crazy, Solo. I'm just beginning to show signs of sanity. Maybe I'm in love. It begins to look like it—and I feel like it. And the first move in that game is to clear Deborah from the mess that precious father and brother of hers have stirred up, whatever it is. She has more than an idea that it's not what it ought to be and that she's smeared with their villainy.

"Not interested, eh! Just for that you can lope all the way home."

He swung himself to the saddle of the indifferent Solo and galloped for the Capricorn holding.

CHAPTER IX

UNTO THE THIRD GENERATION

THE days went swiftly by. Jimmy sent his first consignment of kids to market and applied the proceeds to the building of a simple two-story bungalow. The quick

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absorption and radiation of the sun by the sandy soil produced swift changes of temperature and there were nights and early mornings when the thermometer registered under thirty degrees and made the tent a cold and cheerless abode.

Lumber and a carpenter came out from Aztec and Jimmy helped the man with a zest that soon produced results. But every day he rode trail between the Curly O fence and Diablo and every sunset he listened to catch a message over the barbed wire phone.

Paterans he found almost daily and dropped his in return. The cups always held acorns and no taps sounded along the fence. He saw nothing of the girl save two distant glimpses, with once an arm wave, but his love fed lustily upon even such scanty fare. He had no one to talk to about it.

Tezah seemed too remote from his generation; neither did he feel like discussing it with the Indian, who disappeared for a day and a night and reappeared with an Indian pony, which he used in his herding. Solo was absolutely unsatisfactory and the carpenter an impossible confidant. Jimmy went about his work humming in such evident harmony with everybody and everything that the carpenter, a fiddle-faced individual with a troublesome cough, commented on it.

"I wish I hed yore good sperrits," he said, as they sat shingling the roof of Capricorn Lodge. "I'm meloncholy by nater, myself. I've got dyspepsy and I have to live here 'count of my cough and I'd give a heap to feel the way you do. I like to figger, nights, outside of my contracts, and I've figgered out the average number of nails a good workman drives in a lifetime."

"Yes," asked Jimmy. "How many?"

"Not counting brads or window-glass points, one million and ninety-five thousan' seven hundred and thirty-eight. I've driv' more'n a million already and every time I hit one—like this—" he sent home a nail with a quick double stroke—"it ses 'one less.' Jest like drivin' nails in yore own coffin, so to speak. You wouldn't look at it thet way now, would ye?"

"Not me," said Jimmy, deftly splitting a shingle. "I'd call it 'one more,' and hope it went in straight."

Such was his general outlook. Every task was something to be tackled cheerfully. He had a fancy sometimes that Deborah was beside him and he wondered how she would like the house, insisting upon big closets despite the carpenter's protest.

"Jest wastin' lumber, unless you're aimin' to get married," he said. "In thet case you're savin' time. If wimmin was architects, houses 'ud have ten closets, and three rooms."

Jimmy felt his face flush under the bronze. He countered to hide his confusion.

"Ever married yourself?"

"Three times. One died, t'other got a divorce an' the third run away with a Mexican. Don't try it. It's jest plumb hell, take it from me. Which side do you want the verandy on?"

"Looking west. Let's go to it."

Tezah's tales during the evening smokes began to smack of romance. Jimmy began to suspect some purpose in the constant string of cliff-leaping lovers and forlorn maidens changed to wailing water and wind spirits and one night he tested the idea.

"Haven't you anything more cheerful? What's the matter with your war stories?"

The chief's eyes twinkled.

"The love of a man for a maiden is a good thing," he said. "Even when the end is sorrowful it is good while it holds. For there are four things in a man's life that are good; to eat, to fight, to love and to listen to the talk of children. Is it not so, señor?"

Jimmy, relighting his pipe, nodded.

"The señor loves a maid?"

Jimmy did not fence with the old man.

"How did you know?" he asked.

Tezah chuckled.

"The antelope mates. He snorts and runs fast and leaps in the Spring."

Jimmy laughed.

"Do I do that?"

"As a man does such things. And the señor brings often home a token that he does not throw away. In the señor's room are many sprays that have faded but still look fair and smell sweet to him. And there are always fresh ones in a glass. There is one now in the señor's pocket."

Jimmy glanced at the spray set in his shirt above his heart.

"Perhaps you're right, Tezah. Wish me luck?"

"Señor, I do. I have prayed to the Aco. But you do not need my wish. You carry Luck with you. When a man's shoulders are square, as yours are, Luck rides easily upon them."

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Jimmy, knocking out the ashes of his pipe, sighed. He wished Luck would bring him in touch with Deborah.

He rode out to Diablo the next afternoon. The house was finished and the melancholy carpenter had departed.

"We'll go back to New York, of course," mused Jimmy, day-dreaming on the ledge. "Dad and Deborah are going to get along in fine shape. But we'll keep the ranch and come out once in a while to Capricorn Lodge. I'll give it to Tezah on that condition. This country grips you hard."

He walked to the limit of the ledge and looked toward his land. To the north a faint line of shifting purple rose above the hills that marked the boundary of the holding. Jimmy gazed intently. There was little haze in the New Mexico atmosphere, none on days like this.

THE line lifted and swiftly increased in density, rolling upward in clouds that were unmistakably smoke. As he looked he saw a sudden crease of fire below it like the blood that follows a swift knife slash.

He leaped down the trail to his pony. The Capricorn ranch was afire. There was practically no wind but between the hills and the cañon the grazing land was thickly furred with brush, highly inflammable at that season. The flames would create their own draft and sweep the land as a storm drives dead leaves.

His goats were south of the house, between it and Turquoise Cañon. He had built by the spring. The boggy land there might split the fire and hold it for a time but the conflagration would circle it before long.

Solo drummed across country, his belly to the ground. Topping a rise, Jimmy saw with a groan that the flames had reached the spring head and divided. He could hear their low roar as they rushed on beneath the smoke rapidly assuming the shape of a great U.

He knew Tezah would stay with the goats until the last moment but already they were practically cut off. The timid animals would not face the fire and back of them was the cañon. He could see masses of the burning scrub tossed above the smoke pall, caught by the draft and hurled ahead to start fresh patches of flame.

"Tezah's Luck has tumbled off my shoulders with a vengeance," thought Jimmy bitterly. "The whole thing gone up in smoke! I wonder if we can back-fire and save the herd and the house."

The sides of the burning U began to form a crescent. Solo snorted at the pungent smoke but Jimmy urged him around the nearer horn of fire and sped toward the house, half a mile away in the green valley watered by the spring. He heard the blat of the frightened goats.

Two figures were running along the line of the farther curving arm of the fire. Tezah and another man he did not recognize. They stopped from time to time and little spurts of flame sprang up and began to join in a line where the two had ignited the dry grass and herbage.

"Back-firing!" cried Jimmy. "Bully for Tezah. I'll tackle this side!"

He looked around to see if he was far enough ahead of the flames, feeling for his matches. A rider was racing toward him, just rounding the barrier of smoke and fire that had almost reached the cañon and was curving in to complete the circle about the house and herd.

It was Deborah. Her pinto pony, with nostrils flaring came pounding on, tossing its head wildly, the girl firm in the saddle. He saw the flash of her eyes and the steady set of her mouth and chin as she dashed up and dismounted by his side.

"I saw the smoke across the cañon," she said, "and I guessed you were in danger. What can I do?"

Jimmy gave her one glance of eminent appreciation.

"We'll fight it back. Take these matches and light the brush every dozen yards. Work up toward the spring."

He gave her half his store and ran ahead on foot toward the cañon and worked back back-firing as he went. Deborah crouched and struck a match on her bootheel, touching the burning splinter to a tuft of grass. It flared up and she started another spot nearer the house, following the base of the little hills that helped to hold the valley still unscathed in its greenness. Her task completed, Deborah turned to rejoin Jimmy.

They met midway to the cañon. Their back-fire was climbing the slope bravely to meet the main conflagration, leaving a blackened track of safety clear from fuel. The heat seared them where they stood, scorching their lungs and forcing them to retreat a little. Flakes of brush flew above them

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in glowing masses and kindled little fires that they stamped out swiftly. But the main blaze was checked.

A mass of sparks lit on Deborah's riding skirt and smoldered rapidly, eating the cloth. Jimmy smothered it with his hands.

"You've burned them," she said. "Let me see them?"

Jimmy closed his fingers over his blistered palms but she would not be denied and, taking his hands in hers, unrolled his fists.

"It's nothing," he said. "A little grease will fix it. You're not burned?"

"No. My father and the rest are at the ranch," she went on. "Somebody came late last night, on foot I think, and left before morning. That has put them in a good humor and they have been playing cards together since breakfast. For the last five days they have been in the cañon."

Jimmy understood her eagerness to acquit the Curly O from any charge of being incendiaries and reassured her.

"Lots of things to start a fire this weather. We've saved the herd and the house anyway, thanks to you and whoever has been helping Tezah. I shall never forget your coming to aid me. You might have been cut off. You——"

Jimmy spoke with eyes more eloquent than his words but she checked him with a glance back of him. The man who had been with Tezah was coming toward them across the unburned ground. Sweat glistened on the bald dome of his uncovered head and the end of his long beard was singed. With a shout Jimmy welcomed Amber, and the goatman hailed him in return.

"I jest come along 'n time. I was aimin' to visit ye and I've got a message. I saw the fire as I rode up and I turned to and helped your *campero* fight it. Come prit' nigh't gettin' away with ye, didn't it."

Jimmy introduced him to Deborah and they shook hands. Amber made no mention of her father and the three watched the sullen defeat of the flames.

The head of the little oval watered by the spring had resisted the fire. The backfire still fought the invader on the hillsides but the fury of the attack was exhausted and the conflagration practically at an end.

Of Jimmy's original six hundred and forty acres only a narrow strip from the spring to the cañon was saved, less than an eighth of his holding. But Capricorn Lodge was saved and Tezah was quieting the herd. Jimmy looked grimly at the prospect.

"The land is pretty well cleared, at any rate. No need for the goats to trim it."

"It'll be up in a few months," said Amber. "The ashes 'll fertilize what of it you want to plow and the rest 'll be in shape for the goats again. There must be free range you can use. You can't fence it. You'll have to herd but you've got a good *campero* in your Indian. He shaped fine buckin' the fire."

Jimmy's nod gave emphasis to his reply.

"He's a wonder." The loss of his grazing had left him undismayed, buoyed by the exhilaration of Deborah's presence and her bravery. "Come over to the house," he suggested. "We need sprucing up a bit."

They looked at each other and laughed. Their faces were scorched and smutted and their clothes in worse shape with burns and smears. But Deborah demurred.

"I must get back before they miss me. But I should like to see your house."

Tezah met them by the goat fence with news.

"IT WAS an Indian who started it, señor. I was at the spring when I saw him passing through the willows. He was a yellow face. An Apache, I think. I called to him but I was with a ewe that had two new-born kids and I could not leave them. He did not answer but went on between the hills."

Jimmy translated for Deborah's benefit.

"Hed any trouble with Injuns?" asked Amber. "Don't seem likely an Apache would range this far north. Still, he ought to know. Sure it was an Injun?" he asked Tezah.

"I think so, señor. I could not see well through the willows but he had a yellow face."

"Humph!" Amber suddenly slapped his thigh. "I'll wager it was the Chink I met on the road up. My horse shied at him. He looked as if he'd rather not have met any one. A fat, yellow-faced Chink with his queue cut off or under his hat! Black sombrero?" he asked Tezah. "Black trousers and black silk shirt."

"*Si*, señor."

"That settles it. That's your man, Hollister. Hard to catch now, I reckon, since he met me and knows your *campero* sighted him."

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Jimmy and the girl looked at each other, a mutual thought in their eyes. Jimmy voiced it.

"Ah Fung! Then Stimpson isn't far away. Perhaps he was at your house last night." She shook her head.

"Not Stimpson. I couldn't hear anything but murmurs, but the strange voice wasn't deep enough for Stimpson's."

Her face was so troubled that Amber instinctively turned aside to speak with Tezah. Jimmy and the girl entered the house together. She stood by the table, talking quickly, her face flushed.

"I have brought this on you. I warned you not to come to Aztec. I know they are trying to drive you away. I've heard them talking about it. They have got dogs on the place that they are keeping hungry for some horrible purpose they treat as a jest. And now——"

There were tears in her eyes, welled from anger and distress. Jimmy took both her hands and held them as he answered her gravely.

"Now see here, Deborah. You have got nothing to do with any grudge your folks may have against me. It's a good deal on your account, I'll grant that, but if you warned me twenty times to stay away from Aztec and there were twenty men at the Curly O instead of four, I'd be here just the same and I'd stick. Your troubles are my troubles. If Stimpson's here you need me more than ever. It's time for action and plain talking. Do you know why I wanted you to see my house?"

She shrank from him suddenly with a cry of protest.

"Don't. Please don't! If you want to do something for me, go away for my sake and your own. There can never be anything between us. You are different. Your people are not like my people."

She spoke half hysterically and Jimmy tried to soothe her.

"It doesn't make the slightest difference about our people. You've been worrying yourself that your father and brother and Stimpson are mixed up in some crooked deal. Maybe they are. Maybe not. You're not and I'm not. As long as we love each other——"

Deborah stood against the wall her arms outspread against it as if she would have forced her way through.

"If—if I did love you, that would be just the reason for you to go away. It's bred in my blood."

"Nonsense!"

He tried to take her in his arms but she ran 'round the table to the door with so wild a look of distress that he halted.

"Oh, why don't you understand? A taint like that does not die out."

Her face was blazing crimson as her lips. As Jimmy looked at her a light broke on him. The tenderness he felt for her was vibrant in his voice.

"I think I do understand. But we'll risk that."

"No—no!"

With a quick movement she fled through the door and ran to her pony that Tezah had caught and hitched to a post by the veranda. She unsnapped the halter with eager fingers, mounted and, with a cut of her quirt, went flying toward the cañon. Jimmy looked after her with his heart in his eyes.

"You're not going to run away from me like that, honey," he said to himself, "not for all your worry about the sins of the father and the third generation."

CHAPTER X

TARGET PRACTISE

JIMMY was forced to dismiss temporarily the problem of Deborah while he listened to the news of his visitor who had traveled so far to see him.

"I was in Denver last week," said Amber. "I put up at the Palace. I saw your name on the register and you can bet it looked good to me. Clerk said the party was in and I waltzed up to the room an' breezed in on an old gent straight as an arrer an' lookin' jest as sharp an' gen'ally effective. Then I see my mistake, not bein' familiar with your handwritin'. The gent looked like you grown up and I savvied who it was and introduced myself."

"Dad!" exclaimed Jimmy, shaken out of the apathetic mood in which he was listening.

"One and the same. And a fine specimen of pure seventeen-dollar-to-the-ounce mineral he is. He and me cottoned to each other right away. Styles was different but we thought a heap along the same lines. Had dinner together. Yes, siree. You didn't tell me what to say or not to say so I used my own judgment. He was goin' through

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to the coast, Californywards and stopped over to see if he could locate you. He needs you, I'm thinkin'. Straight as an arrer and bright-eyed, but not so keen as he was I'm thinkin'."

Jimmy was stricken with a sudden qualm of homesickness and self-blame.

"Not sick?" he asked.

"Not a bit of it. I told him how you was makin' good. I heard thet from the man you sold your kids to. Proud as a stallion, he was. 'He's a good lad,' he says. 'He'll go far. But he'll not go too far from me, I know that. It's the Hollister habit, sir,' he says, 'to want to stand on their own feet. When Jimmy's sure he's firm an' steady, he'll let me know. I'm not goin' to interfere.'

"Then I tells him I was goin' to pay you a visit an' he gave me a letter to give you. Wouldn't let me give him your address. No, siree. Said you'd answer it if things was right an' thet he'd be in New York in two weeks."

Jimmy took the letter with eyes that were unaffectedly moist.

"I'll write to him. If he needs me I'll go back soon. I've got a lot of good out of this experience. I can sell off the herd. But there's something else keeps me here for a while."

The old goatman nodded and hesitated for a moment before he spoke.

"Don't think me interferin', but me an' your dad got to be real good friends. Yes, siree. An' I'm as old as he is so you mustn't mind my talkin'. I can see how the land lies. Don't let anything I said about Shepherd Dane weigh against his gel. There's good stock springs out of bad an' vicey worser.

"She's a plucky lass an' a true one, I believe. Ef there's anything I can do, say the word an' I'll stay over and help out. Ef you're aimin' to pry her loose from thet crowd you've got a good object but a hard road. I'm due in Durango at a herders' meetin' day after to-morrow but say the word an' I'm with ye. Or wire me there, care of the Hotel Argent till Thursday, after that at Amber Ranch, Pagoda Junction, Archuleta County an' I'll come a-humpin'."

"No, thanks. I'm awfully glad you met dad and you liked each other. I can't say enough about your coming down here. I'm just as proud to be able to call you my friend as dad is."

The old goatman pumped Jimmy's hand fervently.

"Spit' an' image of your dad," he said. "Here's hopin' the three of us meet mighty soon. I hate to go but if I don't connect with the night train I'll be twenty-four hours behind the meetin'. Look out how you tackle thet crowd of the Shepherd's."

"I'll go easy," said Jimmy. "And if I need you, I'll wire. But you'll stay overnight."

"Till to-morrow afternoon. Hev you got a gun?"

Jimmy produced his automatic. Amber handled it doubtfully and his voice echoed his actions.

"They say they're fine, but I'll stick to the old cannon."

He produced a heavy-calibered Colt and passed it to Jimmy.

"I was goin' to leave this with you. Can you hit anything with that contraption."

"It's got eight bullets to your five," said Jimmy, "but I'll make a match with you, shot for shot." Amber rose, pistol in hand.

"Done! Flyin' or sot?"

"Either."

"Make it flyin'. I'll show ye a trick or two, young feller, that'll take the conceit out of ye. Dollar a shot? I used to be able to spin a tomatter-can once on a time."

"You're on. Tezah!"

The Indian brought a score of new potatoes of even size at Jimmy's request, and stood ready to toss them up at command.

Amber took the first shot and, on the report, gouged the tuber that fell on the turf. He looked at Jimmy with a grin.

"Not so bad, for an old-timer! Go to it, son."

Jimmy threw down his automatic from the shoulder as the potato turned in its arc and brought down his wrist smartly to a quick arrest. The potato rolled along the grass.

"Miss!"

"Pick it up, Tezah," said Jimmy and exhibited the potato bored cleanly through the middle, the main pulp still unbroken. Amber tugged at his beard as he admitted the hit.

"Dead center, all right. Question is, would that stop a man ef it didn't happen to bore his vitals?"

He smashed his next target to fragments.

"Like that," he said.

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THE match ended with four hits for Jimmy and three for Amber who solemnly handed over the dollar. Jimmy flipped it skyward and pulled a swift trigger on the three remaining shells. The first bullet met the descending coin and hurled it high into the air. The third shot caught it just as it hit the ground. Amber shouted as the turf flew.

"By ginger! You got it twice. Durned if you didn't."

He retrieved the dollar, blistered out of shape and heavily nicked on the milling and gave it back to Jimmy with an air of profound respect.

"Blamed ef I ever saw the like. How in Sam Hill do ye do it? Bill Cody was a joke to you."

It was Jimmy's turn to grin.

"Lots of time and lots of cartridges."

"I'd hate to stand up ag'in' ye ef you was shootin' mad. I reckon you can take care of yerself without me. Durn me ef I don't buy one of 'em."

Jimmy privately resolved to send an automatic to Pagoda Junction at the first opportunity. The bout and his success had done him good. The reports seemed to have cleared the air and his brain at the same time.

"You ain't opened your letter yet," said Amber after they had cleaned their guns. "I'll take a look over your herd an' give you a chance."

Jimmy read:

My Dear Son:

I knew you'd make good. When you have satisfied yourself with the hard knocks you mentioned in your last letter, come home and take it easier for yourself and make it easier for me.

I'm getting along a bit and Big Business tires me a little at times. It needs a younger hand on my helm perhaps. There is lots of room in the old home and in my heart for you. Room that will be shared before long I hope by a daughter together with the son of whom I am proud.

Your affectionate father,

James J. Hollister.

The writing looked a bit shaky to Jimmy and a little misty too.

"God bless him," he said, as he folded up the letter. "I wonder how he and Deborah will get along?"

He put the envelope away and picked up his pipe. He had made up his mind not to let anything stand between the girl and himself.

"I've told her I love her," he argued, "and she didn't say she didn't love me. What's more I believe she does. If she was once married to me and back in New York, I could make her forget about her scoundrelly relations and her fear of taint. She meant kiddies, of course!"

His face softened as he went out to the corral.

Late that night he sat out on the veranda in the darkness, half the starry horizon blotted out by the hills, the smell of burned brush in the cool night air. Amber and Tezah had gone to bed and Jimmy thrashed over and over the means to accomplish his purpose. He was a little worried over his father's trip to the Pacific Coast in the fear that some vital business emergency summoned him personally to protect his Western interests, but he dismissed that for the question closer at hand.

"The thing to do," he told himself for the tenth time, "is to run away with her. If I hid in one of the caves in the cañon and found out what that gang is up to I might be able to whip her father into line and even handle Stimpson. But if she found out that I had discovered her father to be a thief or a crook she'd balk. I've got to persuade her to marry me out of hand."

He paced up and down the planks, sucking at his empty pipe for inspiration.

A sudden frenzied blatting of goats checked his cogitation and he leaped from the platform and ran toward the fenced inclosure, gun in hand. In the starlight he could see the herd milling in frantic turmoil, a frenzy of uprearing animals from the midst of which came a hideous snarling.

As he raced up, shouting, a gray shadow broke from the mêlée of fleeces and leaped the four-foot hog-fence as Jimmy fired. The thing collapsed in midspring, struck the taut wires, hung there an instant, then rolled over to the ground with a thud.

Tezah came hurrying with a lantern, Amber close behind him, gun in hand. Jimmy took the light from the Indian, leaving him to soothe the goats. The animal he had shot lay in a puddle of blood from a hole in its head. It was a great dog of hybrid hound type with a shaggy coat and great jaws in which the fangs gleamed from the drawn-back gums.

"Kyote?" asked Amber peering at the dead brute.

"No," said Jimmy sternly. "I hate to

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kill a dog that has been trained to do this sort of thing by a pack of cowards. They are trying to drive me out, are they? Fire first and now this. I'll take the carcass over to the Curly O tomorrow and have a reckoning. I was looking for a good excuse."

CHAPTER XI

JIMMY PUTS OVER A BLUFF

WHEN Jimmy Hollister surveyed his charred hills the next morning and saw the body of the great hound beside his goat corral, he stiffened his determination to ride over to the Curly O with the carcass. He was keen to tell the outfit what he thought of them and he wanted to find out if Stimpson had arrived.

Most of all, he hoped for a glimpse of Deborah and the chance of a few words with her. With the advent of Ah Fung, which, to his mind, presaged that of Stimpson, he saw fresh barriers raised.

"If I can get her away," he thought, "or arrange for a meeting, I may be able to override all her objections and persuade her to come to me for once and always."

The Capricorn ranch was in sad shape. The small amount of unburned acreage was sufficient only to last a few days for the ever-hungry Angoras and after that he would have to depend upon the too scanty croppage of the free range. But it had not been a failure, he felt, as he leaned over the fence and watched the goats grazing contentedly.

He could give it up without the feeling of being a quitter. Deborah and he could be married in Aztec, they could take the train to Denver and change to the transcontinental line. Within a week they would be in New York.

He warmed at the picture but he sensed the lack of a keystone in the air-castle he was building. Deborah's fear of the taint in her blood had to be overcome and for the life of him he could think of no better way to vanquish it than argument.

"The marrying of a woman by force is easier written of than accomplished," he told himself. "She's got to say 'I will' of her own accord," he reflected ruefully, walking back to the house where the old goatman stood blinking at the sunrise.

At breakfast he decided to take advice from the kindly common sense of Amber, and he told him some of the difficulties across the remains of the meal. The old goatman listened shrewdly and silently until the end.

"One thing pans out of all that muck," he said when Jimmy stopped, waiting for his opinion. "The girl's clean. She stands the acid. She carried the stuff before she began to suspect anything crooked. Stimpson's talk to her the day you interfered opened her eyes. The fact that she thinks herself streaked with their base metal shows she's the real article, like gold in refractory ore. Mebbe her scruples is far-fetched, but she's to be honored for 'em.

"As to the stuff she's been carryin' to Stimpson, I've got a theory on that! 'Parently it was paid for by them clinkin', jinkin' double-eagles you heard at Stimpson's place. Now they wouldn't be buyin' gold with gold. I believe it's cinnabar."

"Cinnabar?"

"Yes, siree. Cinnabar, quicksilver, mercury. The war's sent it up a-scootin' in value. Now there's a heap of good mines closed up for all kinds of reasons—lawyers, estates, manipulation, lack of capital or confidence. I figger they've struck some one else's working, found the cinnabar themselves, mebbe, and they are snakin' out all they can get before some one tumbles to it. Thet's only a theory but it's fairly sound.

"You've got to get her free from thet crowd. It's fairly evident it ain't daughterly affection ties her up so much as it is her scruples keeps her away from you. If Stimpson's showed up they may force her to do somethin' desperate. It's up to you to keep the heart up in her.

"If she's dead-sure you don't give a dern about what's in her blood and are goin' to be unhappy ever after ef she turns you down, she'll think twice about it. Bein' a female you'll find sex'll outweigh scruples in the long run. Yes, siree. You work along thet streak an' you'll strike pay dirt yet. Them pateran and barbed-wire idees of yours is first-rate."

He nodded across the table with an air of such benignant wisdom radiating from his homely features that Jimmy's courage flooded to high tide once more. Amber went on.

"I'll go over with ye to the outfit this mornin'. We might give the Shepherd the idee I'm with you permanent. Anyway

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two's better than one, and because three's better than two I'd recommend takin' along the Injun. He's a fighter and he's a good watchman. You've got to keep your eyes peeled with thet brand of skunks. There's men put away in New York quite frequent, and it 'u'd be an easy matter for them to plant you in one of them caves in the cañon and none the wiser that your corpse wasn't a mummified Aztec when they found it—ef they ever did.

"Thet breed thinks a lot less of gettin' rid of a man than you did of shooting thet dog last night. Yes, siree. I know 'em. There's just two things 'u'd keep 'em from it. Fear of bein' found out and fear of gettin' hurt. We can go over and see how the land lies, ennyway. Ef things look hostile I'll stick same as I said I would. Has the Injun got a gun?"

"I've a Winchester."

"Good. Give it to him. I'll bet he's opened a breech and peered down a rifle sight many a time."

They had eaten at daybreak, and the land was still orange and purple when they started, Tezah carrying the rifle across the pommel of his saddle in a way that justified Amber's prediction. Jimmy had the carcass of the dog in front of him. The cañon was a rift of violet, with one slowly widening streak of coral along its western rim, as they passed its head.

CLOSE to the line fence Jimmy reined up, dismounted and picked up an intertwined spray of oak and pine. He showed it to Amber.

"She must have ridden out and dropped this last night after she got back. There was none there when I rode out to Diablo yesterday. She wouldn't have stopped to do it when she rode to help me with the fire. See the acorns? Things are all right so far."

"Meanin' Stimpson ain't showed up, I take it. There's the buttes. Take my advice, son. Don't give them a chance to get the drop on ye. You do the talkin' an' we'll keep a lookout. Ef I seem to spring any dime-novel stuff, play up to me.

"I know some of the kinks in their kind. I ain't lived in the State of Colorado sence '68 without gettin' some acquainted with their tricks. No, siree. You speak your piece. Ef the gel's in earshot mebbe you can tip her off about a meetin'-place."

It was good advice, Jimmy considered. His resentment still ran high but, unless he could get in communication with Deborah the trip began to seem somewhat of a fool's errand. There was no especial advantage to be gained in telling the Danes, father and son, what they must guess he thought of them.

The ranch-house appeared deserted save for the lazy curl of smoke from its chimney as they rode up, three abreast, between the buttes. A dog bayed suddenly and a man appeared on the front porch wiping his mouth with his sleeve. He called back through the open door and Shepherd Dane and his son appeared, with the fourth male inmate of the Curly O behind them.

The Shepherd descended the steps and gave a glance over his shoulder at the upper story where Jimmy fancied he saw the flash of a face quickly withdrawn. Then he advanced to meet them.

Tezah held the gate open and they rode into the yard. The younger Dane came down to join his father, the other two remaining at the head of the steps.

"You don't seem to appreciate the value of good advice, my young goat-breeder," said the Shepherd. "I told you it wasn't healthy for you on this side of the cañon."

"Then you keep your dogs and Chinese fire-starters off my land," said Jimmy hotly, "for it isn't healthy for them in that section."

He flung the stark body of the dog at Dane's feet. The Shepherd recoiled.

"I know of no reason why you should dump your carrion here," he said. "The sun seems to have gone to your head with your talk of Chinamen and dogs. I know nothing of it."

"The dog's pardner knows it, Shepherd," broke in Amber.

Somewhere inside the house the bay of the other hound had changed to a howl as if it scented the dead body of its mate. Jimmy saw the men coming down from the veranda.

"We'll finish this talk as we stand," he said. "The Chinaman fired my brush yesterday and I shot the dog harrying my goats. If you think to drive me off my holding by cowardly tricks of that kind, you'll find it as easy to shift Diablo over there. As long as Diablo stays in place you'll find me on my land and able to protect it."

He raised his voice in special emphasis on the word "Diablo," hoping that he might

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catch the attention of Deborah who he was convinced was listening at the upper window. Meanwhile the elder Dane was giving close scrutiny to the man who had called him "Shepherd."

"Find this country enny more healthy than Denver, Shepherd?" asked Amber. "I understood the climate didn't suit you over well back there."

Dane's bull-necked son pushed forward.

"Seems to me you're making a —— of a fuss over a dead dog," he said. "You've been warned off this place once, now get off before you get hurt. And take your meat with you."

He turned over the carcass with his foot and bent to look at the hole in its head.

"Nice clean shot, warn't it?" asked Amber pleasantly. "Purty a shot as I ever seen. One pull in the dark done it as he hopped the fence."

The Shepherd still gazed with puzzled brows at Amber. His son sneered openly.

"It's easy to brag of shooting a dog," he said. "A dog don't pack a gun."

Amber smiled back at him.

"I didn't do it. I ain't jack-high with him when it comes to shootin'!"

Under cover of the talk Jimmy covertly watched the window. The half-curtain shifted ever so slightly. Deborah had heard him, perhaps had understood, perhaps would come to Diablo.

Amber reached into the pocket of his shirt and took out a deck of cards.

"Talkin' of kyards and shootin'," he said, "I'm willin' to bet thet my pardner here can shoot the pip out of an ace with me holdin' it. It'll spile my solitaire pack, but ef you 'ud like to put up a little wager on it, I'll cover it."

He looked meaningly at Jimmy. This was the dime-novel play he had spoken of. Jimmy could see little rhyme or reason for the move but sat silent in his saddle waiting for light.

"You're a gambler, Shepherd, or you used to be. What do you say? Ef my pardner cleans the ace you'll admit he's able to look after his property and ef you should see a dog or a Chinaman headin' his way you might agree, as your end of the bet, to undertake to dissuade 'em. As for his end of it——"

The Shepherd suddenly showed his teeth through his beard and waved his son aside.

"I ain't interested in fancy shootin'. He can fire his popgun if he wants to. Or I'll take your word for it. All I'm interested in is that he keeps his nose off my land and out of my business. He don't belong here. He's a long way from home and the wisest thing for him to do would be to put on his dude clothes and go back East.

"But, if you want to make a gambling point of it, I'll take you up. If he wins he stays and I'll advertise his shootin' if that's what you're after—just so long as he stays his side of the cañon. If he loses, he takes the next train for Flatbush, or wherever he comes from. I don't give a whoop one way or the other. I can look after my own interests."

"What do you say to it, Jimmy?"

Amber's eyes slanted ever so slightly toward the window and Jimmy saw that he too had noticed the curtain.

To Jimmy the suggestion seemed hazardous and unnecessary. But he had practically made up his mind to give up the burned-out ranch, once he had secured Deborah, and there was steady purpose in Amber's eyes. He felt fairly sure of his shooting, though the cards seemed far smaller than he had usually imagined them as he looked at them now in the goatman's hands.

"All right," he said.

"You all play aujence on the steps," said Amber. "The Injun 'll hold the hosses. Here's an ace. The ace of hearts. Seems to stand to reason thet ef a man can plug thet he could hit the human organ which is some bigger as a target."

"Providin' the other man ain't shootin' at the same time."

Amber looked equably at the younger Dane who was scowling at Jimmy, his eyes malevolent.

"I'll put up a good-sized wager on thet too. You want to remember thet he might be jest as anxious to miss hurtin' me, bein' as I'm his pardner, as he might not be ef some one, not bein' his pardner, was on the receivin' end. Would you mind gettin' back on the steps?"

The Curly O quartet grouped themselves about the Shepherd who said something in answer to the muttered protest of his son that appeared to calm him.

Jimmy and Amber dismounted and Tezah held the reins, his face inscrutable, his rifle still at the carry.

"Five paces," said the goatman. "Thet's jest about a rod the way I step it."

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He took up his position, standing firmly but easily, his right hand extended, the card between thumb and forefinger. In Jimmy's eyes it looked hardly bigger than a visiting-card. The curtain stirred again and Deborah's face appeared for a second. Evidently she had seen the men go to the steps and knew that they could not see her. She gave Jimmy a brief nod of understanding. His nerves relaxed and came back to an even tension, brain and blood in perfect coordination.

He took out his automatic and examined it, taking out the clip and replacing it and forcing back the slide to make sure a cartridge was in the breech. He slipped back the safety catch and stood with his right arm loosely swinging at his side. The hound had stopped howling. Tezah held the horses short-checked and the men on the steps leaned forward, rigidly intent.

"Ready," said Amber.

THERE was a flash of blue steel as Jimmy's arm swung upward, flexed at the elbow, down again, to stop dead as the muzzle of his gun spat fire. He seemed to flip the bullet from the barrel. The card twitched in Amber's hand but he still retained it between thumb and finger. He held it to the light, nodded, walked over with it toward the steps and deftly flicked it at the Shepherd. It soared edgewise and dropped between the latter's feet.

"Plumb taken the heart out of things," he said meaningly. "You lose, Shepherd."

Dane looked chagrined and sat stroking his beard. Jimmy replaced his pistol in the holster and remounted with Amber. Dane's son suddenly strode forward, his face convulsed with rage.

"You keep your side of the fence," he shouted. "And out of the cañon, too. You may be a fancy shooter but if I ever come to grips with you, man to man, I'll knock your head off."

There was an animus in his manner that puzzled Jimmy. It was distinct from the hostility displayed by the Shepherd, an air of personal grievance. With it all Jimmy found something to like in the man. He was neither coward nor bully, his aggression was earnest, the challenge direct. Jimmy sat calmly on Solo as he answered:

"Perhaps—and perhaps not. Can you lick Stimpson?"

The other stared.

"What has that got to do with it?"

The wrath in his face gave way to reluctant, unconvinced admiration.

"Did you give Stimpson a beating?" he asked.

"Ask him. Or better, ask your sister. She saw it."

"If you've licked Stimpy, I'll take it all back. Not because I'm afraid of you, and you want to keep clear of our land and out of the cañon. But Stimpy! I'd have given a thousand dollars to see it."

Whatever dislike he held for Jimmy, it was plain that his hatred for Stimpson was far greater. As the trio rode off young Dane waved a hand after them in almost friendly fashion.

"He's got it in for Stimpson," commented Amber. "I've a notion that it's on account of his wantin' to marry his sister. He don't want you to, either, but he sure hates Stimpson."

Jimmy nodded reflectively. It was something deeper than that, he fancied.

"Do you mind telling me just why you pulled off that grand-stand play with the gun?" he asked presently.

Amber chuckled.

"The Shepherd's a gambler. So am I. You've played poker, I reckon. Me too, a heap. And other games. Forty year ago I used to go kitin' down to Denver whenever I made a strike, buy me a new pair of overalls, a side of bacon and some blasting-powder and then breeze into the Nickel Plate and feed my money across the faro layout or over the wheel. The Shepherd was a dealer in them days. He was too crooked for the men that ran the games and he left Denver for the best part of twenty years.

"Now you and me threw a bluff into the Shepherd and his crowd, the kind of a bluff that wins big pots oftener than good kyards, a bluff backed by the fact thet the man behind it is willin' to go the limit. I ain't talkin' about table-stake games. You've got to have the roll behind the bluff. Your roll was your gun play. They know you can shoot an' it's goin' to make 'em careful.

"The Shepherd never bluffed. He always hid cards in a hold-out or the deck was marked. I figger you've gained your ends. You got word through to the gel, and they're goin' to leave you alone for a while."

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"I see," said Jimmy. "At that I can't believe Dane played to lose. I've got a hunch that they are going to make a final haul from the cañon and clear out. He was too willing to take the bet. But, as you say, I've got a breathing-spell and the chance to talk with Deborah. You've helped me wonderfully."

"There's another thing. They don't go in to Aztec often. You'll notice I spoke of you as my pardner. They'll figger I'm with you right along. Three to four is too close odds for them. Ef you like I'll stay."

"No, thanks. I think I can handle it alone. I'm going to try and persuade her to run away with me."

"Bully for you. Come an' stay with me. Unless you're aimin' to go East. Do you need any money?"

He lugged out a fat wallet.

"Call it a loan or I'll buy your herd from you for spot cash and call for 'em later. The Injun can watch 'em till I come. How much do you want?"

Jimmy looked at him affectionately.

"I've got enough. I've got more to thank you for than I know how to express. I wish I had been your partner back in the days you talk of."

"Do you now? I take that as mighty good of you, son. Yes, sirec. And I'd hev been glad to hev had ye."

He beamed on Jimmy with unaffected delight.

"I'll take a bite to eat and ride on to Aztec afterward. Don't forget to wire me. Hotel Argent, Durango, or Pagoda. They'll phone it on to the ranch from the junction. You'll have to let me know how you make out, ennyway."

Jimmy saw the generous Westerner depart with genuine regret and then prepared himself for action. He purposed riding over to Diablo in the afternoon though he did not much expect that Deborah would get the chance to meet him. The wireophone at sunset was what he staked his prospects of success upon.

CHAPTER XII

THE WIREOPHONE

THERE was no sign of Deborah on Diablo. Jimmy consoled himself for the disappointment.

Probably she could not get away from the house for that long, if they'd let her leave at all, he persuaded himself as he rode back to Capricorn Lodge, going close to the gate of the Curly O line fence with the vague hope of finding a pateran. He saw the fresh tracks of several horses, but no sign of Deborah's passing.

"They're in the cañon, making their clean-up," he thought. "I'm pretty certain they're ready for a shift. The Shepherd was altogether too amiable. Deborah's shut up while they are away from the ranch-house. I wonder if I'd dare ride over there on the chance that they've left no one on guard. It's hardly likely. And there's the other dog."

He dismounted and tried to determine how many had passed. The fresh tracks all led one way. They were still in the cañon, but there was no telling how soon they would come out. The sun was already sinking toward the western hills. He gave up trying the medley of hoof-marks.

"Tezah might have done it," he thought, "but I am still too much of a tenderfoot for that. I may meet them coming out."

As he neared the head of the cañon he saw dust rising at the top of the trail. Then he recognized the burly figure of the younger Dane. Four horses with pack-saddles followed between him and two more riders. The Shepherd did not appear.

"Stayed home to guard Deborah," muttered Jimmy. "Stimpson may have shown up."

He did not change Solo's course which would bring him close to the little cavalcade. He had a fancy to inspect the pack-animals at close range.

The Curly O men rode steadily toward him. The two who brought up the rear chatted amicably and Deborah's brother did not appear at all disturbed at the sight of Jimmy.

"They are going to clear out, Solo," said the latter. "It's a hunch and a good one. But they won't go until morning, I fancy, and we've got the night before us. Wait till the wire starts working."

By this time Dane and his equipment were less than fifty yards away. Jimmy, ready to draw his automatic, rode warily on to meet them.

Dane passed him within ten feet. He vouchsafed no greeting but kept his eyes fixed on Jimmy.

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"Thinks he's going to get rid of me."

Jimmy suddenly stiffened in his saddle. He had seen something in the leather band about Dane's sombrero that made him catch his breath. It was a spray of twisted oak and pine and the acorns were gone from the pale green chalices.

Jimmy saw a look of self-complacency melt the sterner rigor of Dane's regard, an answer to the riddle he was asking himself. He held behind a mask the smile that he was tempted to display.

Deborah must have put the pateran in her brother's hatband. As for his fatuous smile, that was a matter that Jimmy set aside for the moment. Perhaps Dane had found other paterans and guessed something of their significance. But this one meant that there was trouble at the Curly O and that she had taken the chance of Jimmy's meeting her brother on the ride she knew the former would take to Diablo.

In an hour when the sun set, he would know the rest. He felt almost friendly toward Dane and the latter seemed affected by the look in Jimmy's face. He grinned.

"Broke his ribs, eh? And spoiled his looks. She told me about it."

The pack-horses passed by. Each bore four boxes of stout wood, heavily roped, about two feet long and a third of that in other measurements.

"Mercury or gold," thought Jimmy. "There is a tidy little sum in that load."

Dane clucked to his horse and joined his companions behind the pack-animals. Jimmy rode on toward the Capricorn ranch for twenty minutes, then guided Solo to a tiny water-hole aside from the trail. Beside this discovery that he had made long ago while exploring the country, he swallowed a quick meal of cold meat and biscuits he had taken the forethought to bring with him, watered Solo and let him graze until the rim of the sun almost touched the top of Diablo's chimney.

AS HE rode back toward the Curly O fence he saw a distant dust-cloud nearing the two buttes that hid the Curly O ranch-house. Now Deborah would be planning to steal away and tap out the message.

Solo cropped at the scanty grass while Jimmy sat beside the fence smoking, listening for the first vibration of the wire. The sun sank with intolerable slowness, it seemed to him, and then, suddenly, it was gone. The eastern sky was aflame with the afterglow, and he watched it fade to purple, to green, to olive. A star or two peeped out and the last hint of shadows vanished. It was night and there was no word from Deborah.

Jimmy gripped his courage hard and flung off the whisper of failure that seemed to enter his ears on the light breeze. A sturdy something told him to wait, until midnight if necessary, but to wait, that Deborah was trying to tell him to have patience. It was an anxious vigil, but he held it, chafing at inaction, steadying his nerves against the time he would have to call upon them.

Deborah in danger! The thought of her peril thrilled him, possessed him with the belief that she needed him and that through this service he would reach the prize, the guerdon of her surrender.

The locusts scraped their wing fiddles. Solo whinnied and he whistled him closer. A hound bayed, far off, in the direction of the ranch-house.

Jimmy's thoughts went gipsying, upborne by optimism. He saw Deborah ensconced in New York, winning the father's heart as she had the son's. He saw . . . .

It came at last. A clangy yet distinct vibration. Then a series of short clicks and long clashes in the International Code, tapped out without punctuation, as if the sender was pressed for time.

Click—clash—clash—clash. Click—click—click—click—thrice repeated. "J. H." The initials of his name.

Jimmy answered.

Clash—clash—click. Click—clash! in the abbreviation of "G. A.—Go ahead!"

He settled down to listen, his brain automatically interpreting the sounds, his brows knitting in the darkness and his jaw thrusting out to match the set of his shoulders.

. . .s . . . .h .e .—.r .e

"S here." That meant Stimpson.

—t .—.r — — —o. .—u —. . .b .—. .l .e —t .—.r —.— —y . .i —.n— —.g. .—.f— — —o .—.r —.—.c.e — —m.e — —m .—a .—.r .—.r —.— —y . . . .h . .i — —m

Jimmy gritted his teeth as he forced himself to listen. Trying to force her to marry Stimpson, were they? There was a break

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in the sending. Then it started again faintly, as if Deborah feared being overheard in a pitiful plea for help.

..i .—a ——m. —a ..—.f .—.r .—a ..i
—..d ——.—q —.—k —.n ——m —..d

The last four symbols stood for "Quick! No more." And the "D" for "Deborah!"

With one hand on the horn of his saddle, the other in Solo's mane, Jimmy vaulted into his seat and galloped through the sage, the message spurring him to action.

"I am afraid. Quick!"

The soft thud of Solo's hoofs repeated it as a chorus to the swift plans that resolved themselves in his brain and were quickly discarded. There were five men in the ranch-house now, perhaps six if Ah Fung had come with Stimpson, as seemed likely. He must trust to luck.

One thing lay in his favor. They would not be expecting him. Deborah would, and she would be willing to go with him. Solo could carry two if Jimmy could set her free without arousing the rest.

A black shape came bounding through the clumps of sage and sprang at his stirrup with a growl. The other dog had been let loose to guard the ranch.

Solo plunged as the hound, foiled in its leap, snarled and snapped at his fetlocks. A side jump showed Jimmy the light of the ranch-house between the buttes, which he had not seen in the darkness. The dog had to be got rid of and he was too close to the house to risk a shot. Solo, uncontrollable for the moment, was tearing toward the buttes, the brute leaping beside them with slavering jaws. Jimmy felt for his knife, a serviceable weapon with a long, stout blade, and opened it.

His polo days, when he had leaned far forward and down to smash the ball beneath his pony's neck, came to his aid. Sinking his knees into Solo's withers, he leaned far down and grabbed for the loose hide of the hound's neck. His fingers clutched a heavy leather collar and, with a sudden output of energy, he heaved the brute clear of the ground and up, clawing at the frantic Solo, snapping its jaws as it tried to twist on Jimmy's viselike grasp, up till the forepaws scraped on the pommel of the saddle.

His drew his knife-blade swiftly across the hound's throat as it threw up its head. The blood spurted thickly and he flung the twitching body into the sage, closed his knife and took both hands to subdue the almost crazy Solo.

"Poor devil," he said. "Doing your duty as you saw it. Well your blood is on their heads. And all over me," he added. "If Deborah sees me suddenly in the light she'll think I've been murdered!"

Solo soothed at last, he tethered him to a low tough branch of mesquite close by the butte.

"Don't whinny, old boy."

The pony thrust its soft muzzle into his hand and looked after him with head erect as Jimmy, trying to wipe off some of the blood with herbage, stole between the sandstone pillars toward the ranch-house, keeping away from the front where the lights showed, and circling the enclosure, wriggling along at last flat to the earth, snakewise.

So he crawled under the bottom strand of the fence and up to the side of the house. The window at which he had seen Deborah on his last visit was above the veranda. It had no other opening to the outside. He would have to attract her attention from the front, light or no light.

Jimmy crawled around foot by foot. He was close to the steps when the door opened and a bar of light streamed down them. He shrank back into the angle of the steps and the veranda and crouched there, hoping he had not been heard.

FEET moved above him and chairs were dragged forward. Unless he made the circuit of the house he could not get beneath Deborah's window nor, with the men outside, could he attempt to communicate with her.

"After all, it's our affair."

That's Stimpson, thought Jimmy.

A match scratched and the voice went on.

"If they don't like it, they can lump it. We're the brains of this thing and I don't intend to waste time arguing with a couple of ivory heads. You got my letter? It's straight. The jig's up in Colorado. They are on to us. We've got to get out and do it —— quick. More'n that, we've got to split up in case they get on our trail. This last lot is the wind-up, but we'll have to get rid of it outside the State. Beat that into the heads of those dummies inside, will you. Is the outfit stowed away safe?"

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"They'll never find that." Jimmy recognized the voice of the younger Dane. "It's in the big cave where we've done the work, buried six feet in the sand. There's picture writing all over the walls. There's one of an Indian shooting arrows into three buffalo. The outfit's under that. No one would find it even if they got into the cave, and the entrance to that is only a slit in the face of the rock, not a regular cave opening at all."

As his son ceased the Shepherd laughed and took up the conversation.

"So the jig's up is it, Stimpy? Well, we've made hay while the sun shone. And I'm used to moving on. I and Ben here and Deborah, we're fond of traveling when we can afford to travel right."

"Ah!"

There was a grating undertone in the exclamation with which Stimpson capped the speech of the Shepherd that made Jimmy inch up his head toward the veranda floor. It held the first serious grind of steel on steel as swordsmen engage in earnest after the preliminary salute.

"That's another matter to be settled," said Stimpson. "I mean about Deborah. I've stood all the nonsense I'm going to. You've stalled me long enough, Shepherd. You got me in wrong with the girl by not telling her she had to marry me before she came to my place the last time."

"The time young Hollister broke your ribs for you?"

Jimmy sensed the deliberate taunt in young Dane's thrust. Matters were culminating fast. "If they get to quarreling," he told himself, "they're playing on my side."

"If he said so, he lies," retorted Stimpson. "That's aside from the point. I want Deborah, and I'm going to have her."

"The —— you are."

"Go easy, son. See here, Stimpy, you can't force the girl to marry you."

"Oh, can't I? Leave that to me. She's going with me, that's flat. You're her father and you've given me your permission or your blessing, whichever you like to call it. That ought to be good enough for her."

"Well, it ain't good enough for me."

Jimmy hugged himself at the truculent note in young Dane's voice.

"What in blazes have you got to do with it?"

"A heap." Jimmy heard the scrape of the chairs as the men rose and faced each other. "See here, dad, I'm sick of your shilly-shallying. You can't double-cross me. It's time Deborah knew anyhow, and I'm going to tell her."

"Tell her what?"

"Several things, Stimpy. The most important is that I'm going to marry her myself!"

Jimmy gasped in unison with Stimpson's astonished growl.

"Are you crazy?"

"She's no more my sister than she is his daughter. Never mind the dope on that. It's straight. She was left in dad's charge when she was a kid after her own father died. That's enough for you to know."

Jimmy's heart leaped. The barriers were down. Deborah need no longer be haunted by the taint of Dane's ill-bred blood. Above him the three voices blended, Stimpson's blustering, the Shepherd's pleading and his son's defiant. Then came the panting sounds of a struggle-and the creak of the railing as Stimpson and young Dane smashed into it. Jimmy clutched his pistol for action.

A chairback splintered with a crash. A shot roared out and Jimmy saw Stimpson staggering backward down the steps, his legs giving under him half way down so that he rolled heavily to the ground and lay still, face upward to the stars.

The door burst open with a babble of excited voices, high over which sounded the hysterical squeal of the Shepherd.

"You've killed him, Ben. My God! You've killed him!"

"Serves him right. He tried to brain me with that chair, —— him. No use crying over it, dad. You're getting soft in your old age. Get a lantern, Jerry, we'll have to bury him. Where's that Chink of his?"

"In the kitchen."

Jimmy darted around the house and crashed into a stand holding empty milk-pails. They clattered noisily to the ground and he heard the rush of feet toward the side railing.

Swearing softly at himself for his clumsiness, he ran 'round back of the house. A door swung open. Ah Fung appeared, swinging a lantern above his head. Jimmy fired and smashed the glass, running zig-zag for the fence. The barbed wire held him and he tore free, ripping shirt and skin together, while a fusillade of shots

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followed. A bullet thudded into the ground by his foot, another sang by his head.

Once he turned to fire at a man who came through the gate and ran shouting to cut him off, shooting at random into the night.

"I've got him, Shepherd," the man cried. "This way, Ben."

Jimmy fired, and the boaster dropped with a groan as Jimmy sped on, jumping the sage clumps while shot after shot sent missiles hurrying in his direction. He came down from a jump with one foot in a prairie-dog hole, tripped and fell heavily.

"There he is, boys," he heard young Dane call out. "We've hit him."

The fall had sent Jimmy's pistol flying and he groped for it, praying that the soft dirt had not fouled the mechanism. Two lanterns were dancing swiftly through the sage as their bearers ran at top speed toward him. They had ceased firing, thinking him killed from his inaction.

The first lantern stopped not ten paces away and the other joined it.

"Somewhere 'round here," said Dane. "Go careful, Jerry, he may sting yet. Hold that lantern higher, Ah Fung. If he's alive you can get even with him for shooting your boss."

Jimmy appreciated the shrewdness of that move even as he realized the jeopardy in which it placed him. It at once kept Ah Fung from informing on them and retained him on their side. Doubtless all hands would join in to save their own necks and swear that Jimmy had fired the shot that killed Stimpson.

"They won't have to worry about that," he thought, as he searched in vain for his weapon. In a few seconds it would all be over. Deborah had depended on him, and all his brave determination had ended in disaster through his own clumsiness.

In desperation he thrust his hand into the sage clump that shielded him as yet from the lanterns. His fingers found the muzzle of his gun that had fallen butt downward into the center of the tough-stemmed bush.

The crack of his two shots was followed by the crash of the lanterns. One light went out and the other flame faltered. Young Dane cursed and three bullets whipped through the sage clump, but failed to hit Jimmy, who, bent double, was making top speed toward the buttes. A light flared up behind him.

Some one had soaked a sagebrush with kerosene and turned it into a high-flaming torch. Fortunately, it seemed rather to dazzle than help the pursuers; and Jimmy, straightening up, sprinted for Solo. He untied the rope swiftly and sprang to the saddle. Solo's hoofs drummed over the ground, his back steady as a table-top, his legs outstretched to the limit of their speed.

CHAPTER XIII

INTO THE CAÑON

JIMMY reached the gate in the Curly O fence and held the fretting Solo to a standstill while he listened. For the first few seconds he heard nothing; then the sound that he expected manifested itself, the rhythmic fall of horses' feet.

They were after him, with no intention of letting him get clear. There was no other angle to look at it, Jimmy decided. Stimpson had said the authorities were already alive to whatever breach of the law they had been engaged in. To allow Jimmy to carry the news of murder would mean, however they might try to shift the blame on him, an arrest that would ultimately land them in the net.

And Deborah was waiting for him. No danger from Stimpson now, but a graver one from young Dane. They might even be able to persuade her, thought Jimmy, that he had shot Stimpson. At all hazards, her rescue must be accomplished before morning.

As he swung up toward his own holding, Jimmy wished with all his heart that Amber had stayed over. The goatman would have been a stalwart ally. Tezah was a good man, if ancient, and it was to secure this reinforcement that he returned to Capricorn Lodge.

He tried to place himself in the position of the Danes. Stimpson was dead and Jimmy was fairly sure that he had badly wounded the man he had hit. That left one man besides the Shepherd, his son and Ah Fung. Four against two.

They would make every effort to get rid of him. That would bring them away from the ranch-house. But Stimpson's body had to be disposed of and some one would remain to guard the girl and get ready for departure.

Jimmy's reasoning sifted down to the

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hope that by eluding the pursuit he might double back to the Curly O ranch-house and, with Tezah, dispose of whoever was there, rescue Deborah and make for Aztec.

He had gained on them; he was certain of that. Solo was fast, and he had in Jimmy a rider compared to whom the men of the Curly O were meal sacks. But how to double on them successfully and split their forces was the immediate question that worried Jimmy. Two to two, he was not afraid of the issue.

He would give no alarm this time. And Deborah; Deborah was waiting in what agony of mind he could well guess after the first shot, the fusilade and the dying sounds of the pursuit.

The light shone from Capricorn Lodge as he passed the goats in their ten-acre fence lot and jumped from the saddle before Solo had slid to a standstill. There was not much time, but there was little to do.

I've got to prevent them bottling me up here, thought Jimmy, or they'll hold me till morning and have a sheriff up here on some yarn they'll fix up so that I'll be held while they get away with Deborah. Where the devil is Tezah?

He ran quickly through the rooms after he had slipped all his money into his pocket for emergencies and loaded himself with cartridges after refilling the clip of the automatic. The Indian was gone and the Winchester was gone with him. Jimmy knew he was not with the goats.

"The one time I really needed him," he told himself.

The sound of a shot came faintly, too heavy for a revolver. Then another and another. Jimmy put out the lamp.

"They've found Tezah," he muttered. "Either he fired all three of those shots or they got rifles when they went back for their horses."

He went silently out on the veranda and stood by Solo, who was gazing toward the cañon, his ears high pricked.

The thunder of a horse ridden at a desperate speed broke the silence, coming nearer and nearer. Jimmy saw a vague blot turn the corner of the corral, racing for the house.

He straightened up with relief. His enemies would not come in that fashion. It was Tezah.

The Indian hauled his panting pony to its haunches and slid off, rifle in hand, as Jimmy softly hailed him. He was naked save for a breech clout in which he thrust a knife and a cartridge belt slung across his shoulder. He came up to Jimmy as lightly as a cat, his eyes gleaming in the starlight.

"Three men coming, señor. They fired at me twice and I shot back. All missed. We were riding hard. Let us go into the house; they are close behind. Listen!"

Once more Jimmy heard the ominous thud of hoofs.

"Three of them? Then the Shepherd's along, and Ah Fung and the man I hit are with the girl. We've got to get across the cañon without their seeing us, Tezah."

The Indian nodded.

"The girl?"

"Yes. There's no time to lose. Come on!"

"There is a short cut, señor. We can cross the cañon. But we can not take the horses, and it is dangerous in the dark."

"Come on."

A moment later and they were stealing through the sage. Tezah seemed to have recovered his youth in action; and Jimmy, eager, as he was, was hard put to it to keep up with the old chief. On the brink of the cañon the Indian cast about like a dog on a lost scent while Jimmy fought his impatience. The hoofbeats were no longer audible.

Surrounding the house, I hope, thought Jimmy. They'll see the ponies and think we're inside.

"Found it, Tezah?"

The Indian had come up to him noiseless and almost unseen.

"Yes, señor. I will go first. Let your foot always follow my hand. Carry the rifle and pass it to me as I ask."

Later, when Jimmy surveyed the cliff in daylight, he could not make out the track, if track it could be called, down which Tezah led him, placing his feet, giving him minute instructions for every projection and cavity.

Twice Jimmy, passing down the rifle, hung by his fingertips to a narrow ledge and let himself drop through the blackness. Once Tezah saved him as he swayed, holding him back against the wall with a thin arm that seemed made of steel. After that slip they rested for a moment, weak with lack of breath and the narrow escape.

"I heard a coyote, señor," whispered

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Tezah. "So I rode out with my rifle and, between two hills, I almost met the three men. I did not hear you."

"I took a short cut. We must get the girl, Tezah, and some horses. We could never get her up this way——"

"No, señor. One may climb down, but not up on this side."

"The man who fired the brush is at the ranch-house, the yellow-faced Chinaman. And another that I wounded."

"Yes, señor. It would be easy. Are you ready?"

Once, as Jimmy looked up, he saw a thin strip of sky glittering with stars above the wedge of the cañon. They climbed through blackness and it seemed an age before they reached the bottom and hurried across the boulder-strewn space. The up-climb was harder, but less hazardous.

Half-way to the top they struck a mountaineer's chimney, a deep groove in the rock, up which they thrust themselves by their knees and elbows, emerging at last on the verge of the precipice within fifty feet of the fence, passed through the wires and struck out at a dog trot across country for the ranch-house, which, Tezah declared, was in a straight line with the route they had taken.

At the buttes they halted.

"We want to locate those horses, Tezah, though we can't spare much time. No telling how soon they'll find out we're not in the house. They may be on the way back now."

"No, señor. They are not yet on this side of the cañon. I heard some shots on the other side as we came."

Jimmy did not doubt Tezah's authoritative statement.

"They must have been firing through the walls. That means they will soon know we are not there. Where the devil have they put those horses? There were four of them they used for pack-animals."

The barn doors were open and the place empty. So was the corral and the inclosure.

"Grazing out," said Jimmy. "Heaven knows where! Confound it! We can't walk to Aztec. It's no use wasting time, Tezah. Let's go to the house."

They spoke in whispers. Jimmy's spirit was sore at the way luck was breaking against them. First, the milk-pails, and now the horses, he thought bitterly. But we'll jam through somehow, he determined.

ONE window in the rear showed a light, next to the door where Ah Fung had appeared with the lantern in his hand.

"That's the kitchen," said Jimmy. "See if the Chinaman's there, Tezah. You can go more quickly than I can."

The Indian had melted into the night before the sentence was finished. He reappeared before Jimmy thought he had reached the house.

"The yellow-face sits at the table, señor," he reported. "He has a gun beside him and an ax. Also he listens and is afraid. I make no noise, but he thinks he hears many. If the señor wishes I will take care of the yellow-face."

He spoke contemptuously. Jimmy reflected. The wounded man was yet to be accounted for, and he could only signal to Deborah's window from the front.

"All right. Go back to the window. If you hear a shot or a struggle, see that he does not get to the front of the house."

They were outside the wires of the inclosure. Jimmy stole cautiously 'round to the front, where all was dark. He saw nothing of the man and opened the gate silently, tiptoeing up the hard-trodden dirt of the path. Something lay across it like a log.

At first Jimmy thought it was Stimpson, but the man's face was beardless, as it showed gray and still in the darkness.

"Dead," thought Jimmy.

The idea of having killed a man awed him even in his emergency, and he knelt by the body and felt for a heartbeat. The shirt was sticky with blood, though the hemorrhage had stopped. The man had been shot through the shoulder. His pulses were low but steady, and Jimmy felt relieved at the slow, persistent throb.

"Glad I didn't kill him," he thought. "What am I going to do with him? If I shift him he may start bleeding."

He remembered seeing a canvas hammock on the porch when he had ridden up with Amber. There had been a blanket on it. For a moment he swung between the horns of a dilemma. Then humanity conquered. He tiptoed to the veranda and up the steps, released the hammock from the hooks, made it into a bundle and went back to the man.

He fashioned a pillow from the canvas and slipped it under the limp neck and spread the blanket across the body. The

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man moaned slightly but did not regain consciousness.

"Couldn't leave him like that," Jimmy told himself. "If he caught cold in the wound I gave him it would be practically murder. He's out of the fighting, anyway. Maybe I'm a fool, but I can't help it. Now for Deborah. We'll get Ah Fung between the two of us if the door's open."

The main entrance had been left unlocked in the flurry of the pursuit, and Jimmy found himself in a narrow passage. Along this he groped with extended hands, finding doors to right and left and bringing up against one at the end. As he lightly fingered the latch he heard the noise of a shifting chair, followed by the opening of a door. Ah Fung's voice sounded in a startled—

"Who that?"

Jimmy heard a quick rush of padded feet, a stifled "Hi yah!" from the Chinaman, and the noise of a fall as he threw open the door of the kitchen. Ah Fung was on the floor, his ax beside him, Tezah seated on his chest, pinning down Ah Fung's arms with his knees, while he flourished a knife before the Oriental's putty-colored features.

"You spik, I keel," he said in broken English, his old eyes flaring crimson in the lamplight.

Ah Fung, gazing at the demoniac countenance of the Indian, seemed paralyzed with fear. Jimmy swiftly crossed the room; and, between them, they trussed him so that he could not move, and set him up in a corner.

"Where's the girl?" snapped Jimmy.

"Topside!" Ah Fung rolled his eyes upward.

"Where are the horses?"

"*No sabe. No sabe,* me tellee you," he almost screamed as Tezah, understanding his mongrel frontier Spanish, threatened him with the knife. "Suppose I *sabe,* I tell," he said sullenly. "You think I —— fool?"

"Stimpson had a horse. You came with him."

Ah Fung shook his head.

"We come in automobeel. It go back. Come again tomollow."

Tezah gave an exclamation. The moon had risen and its beams were streaming in through the window.

The satellite was at the full. By its light their escape, without horses, would be made more difficult. Jimmy caught up a dish-towel and effectively gagged the Chinaman, laying him, with Tezah's help, on the floor. He took the lamp and sought the staircase. A door to his left opened on it and he leaped up the stairs.

The door of the room was locked, as he had expected, but he burst the lock with his shoulder, setting down the lamp on the floor and bracing his feet against the opposite wall.

Deborah was lying on the bed, fully dressed. Raising the lamp, Jimmy saw she was bound and gagged as securely as Ah Fung, down-stairs. But her eyes smiled bravely into his.

She tottered as she stood on her feet, and Jimmy caught her in his arms.

"I'll be all right in a minute," she said. "My feet are numb. They bound me just before they started after you. How did you escape them. I thought they had killed you."

Jimmy smiled at her.

"Not yet. But we've got to get out of this. Do you know where they keep the pack-horses?"

"Something frightened them and they stampeded, I heard Jerry say. They didn't go after them, because they are all going away tomorrow in a motor car."

Jimmy swallowed something he did not care to have her hear.

"The moon's up. They'll be watching the road to Aztec on this side. It's four hours' ride. Take us ten to walk. And my ponies are at the ranch."

He preceded her down-stairs and explained the situation to Tezah.

"We must go down into the cañon, señor," said the Indian. "We can hide in the caves if they come. If they do not see us, tomorrow I can go and get horses and help. I can pass like the lizard."

"Down the way we came? Deborah can never make it."

"With a rope, señor. I saw some in the barn. And the moon will help."

Only the rim of the chasm was silvered with the moonlight, but it served to lower Deborah safely down the chute. Half-way the darkness swallowed her up. With the rope fastened about a great boulder, Jimmy descended next and found Deborah safely on a ledge.

"The rest is fairly easy," he said. "Here comes Tezah."

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They watched the Indian slide down the illuminated patch. Just as he reached the shadow a shot rang across out the cañon and a bullet flattened close to his head.

"Two of them, señor," he said. "They will ride to the head of the cañon. We must hurry or they will be waiting for us at the bottom."

CHAPTER XIV

THE CLIFF-DWELLING

THE absence of the third man, Jimmy reasoned, as they felt their way down the cliff, Tezah leading, Deborah between them, meant that one of their pursuers was scouting along the cañon edge. Now that they had been seen, the lower cañon would be guarded. Probably the man would ride along the rim until he could descend the easier slopes farther down, while his fellows made for the trail at the head of the ravine.

Then they would ride toward each other seeking for the fugitives. He contemplated and discussed the idea of a sortie. Dawn was not far off. He had noticed the clock in the Curly O kitchen after they had secured Ah Fung. It was then close to three o'clock. It would be nearly four before they arrived at the bottom. Deborah bravely surrendered herself to their guidance, but progress was slow, goaded as they were by the thought of the riders hastening to intercept them.

Tezah's solution was the only available one, to hide in some cave and hold them off. Even then, despite the Indian's promise to "pass like a lizard," Jimmy felt affairs were desperate. They were without food, and soon they would be without water, while their besiegers could supply themselves at will.

The descent was made in silence, save for the unavoidable noise of their footsteps. Once in a while a stone would shift or a fragment of weather-rotted stone break off and go clattering to the floor of the cañon, a guide to their foes, if they were near enough.

Deborah's fingers grasped Jimmy's with a confiding pressure as he helped to lower her from ledges that Tezah's eyes seemed to find catwise in the blackness. Jimmy fervently blessed the day that he had rescued the Indian. Without him they could have done nothing but attempt to escape on foot and undoubtedly have been overtaken. The good news he held for her could wait. It seemed almost petty in the face of their present peril.

Turquoise Cañon was, to all intents and purposes, as remote from civilization as if it had been in the middle of a desert. Any help that Tezah might bring would take hours, while Deborah lacked water, and they held off the Danes. His brief experience in the cañon had given him knowledge of the oven-like heat, that would penetrate even the caves.

"S-s-t!"

Jimmy, standing beside Deborah, both spread-eagled against the cliff, strained his hearing to catch Tezah's low words.

"They are in the cañon, señor. And here is a bad place. Let me have your belt and handkerchief."

While Jimmy cautiously fumbled to release the articles, holding on with one hand, he tried to distinguish in vain the sounds that the Indian's desert-trained senses had caught. It was getting lighter, very slowly, but the stars were losing their brightness and the vague edges of the cliffs were beginning to assume distinct formation.

He dared not look down, but all about him the blackness was gradually changing. Deborah's white waist, invisible a few seconds ago, was now a dull gray.

"Hurry, señor. They are coming!"

He felt the Indian's hand close to his foot; and, stooping at the risk of losing his balance, lowered his belt and the stout bandanna handkerchief he had worn about his neck. Tezah found them and Jimmy let go of them at the tug.

They had come to a sheer drop of almost smooth rock. Jimmy remembered that Tezah had negotiated it on the way up by climbing on his shoulders to a ledge, from which he had given him an arm. On this ledge the Indian was now standing.

"The señorita's foot."

Tezah's voice held an anxious plea for speed. Jimmy sank his fingers, already raw, far into a crevice.

"I'm set, Deborah," he whispered. "Clamber round me and grip my legs as you lower yourself."

He felt her hands about him as she maneuvered herself in position and heard Tezah's low call of "*Bueno*," as the girl's foot found his guiding hand. In turn he found the ledge.

"The señor is taller," said the Indian.

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"I will let you down, and the señorita can rest upon your shoulders. We are close to the bottom."

The leather of the belt creaked as Jimmy clung to it. The darkness was rapidly dissolving. He could see Tezah's body, braced asquat on the ledge, his feet against a jutting rock, the handkerchief wound about his hands, his eyes full in their sockets from the strain. He felt with his feet for a hold. His toes found something solid, but as he tried to rest his weight it gave way and went bounding down the incline, striking with a noisy, shattering impact on a boulder at the bottom, the sound echoing up and down the cañon.

A shout came from near at hand. A flash of fire spurted in the darkness. Jimmy heard the sullen spat of the lead on the rock beside him. Then he found solid rock.

As he stood, waiting for Deborah, his arms outstretched, his hands groping for her feet, face to the rock, another bullet sped whistling behind him, followed by the sharp clatter of hoofs on the stones of the dry watercourse.

Deborah's shoes touched his shoulders and he felt the warmth of her supple body gliding down his own and, for a moment, her arms clinging about his neck. Tezah followed nimbly and they slid and scrambled down the last few feet of the descent.

The stars were almost out and the strip of sky, dark olive, with one tiny cloud heralded the imminent sunrise. Twenty yards away two horsemen were spurring through the dusk. On one of them the Shepherd's white beard showed behind his pony's neck. Jimmy had put his automatic in his hip pocket while they used the belt. Tezah had the rifle. A shot roared and he fumbled for his gun. It had caught in the lining.

"Quick, señor, this way!" called Tezah.

He caught Deborah's hand and started after the Indian, dodging between the great boulders fallen from the cliff. Tezah turned aside and sped up a narrow trail to where the crumbling walls of a cliff-dwelling nestled eyrie fashion in a cavity of the rock.

Deborah's strength was failing and Jimmy thrust her before him up the incline with his hands about her hips. Bullets spattered fragments of dirt and rock about them, but they gained the ledge and darted behind the tumble-down wall of stones and entered a musty chamber, loopholed to the cañon, roofless save for the overhanging ledge several feet above the top of the wall.

DEBORAH sank exhausted on the dusty floor as Jimmy swung to the loophole and fired. His heart was pumping furiously from the last burst and his shot went high, while the Shepherd and his son rode unscathed behind a mass of rock that completely hid them and their horses. Presently a rifle barrel showed between a crevice and a bullet fairly entered the loophole, glancing from a flinty stone and ricocheting into the chamber.

Jimmy heard an exclamation and turned in the sharp fear that Deborah was wounded.

"It is nothing, señor."

The tangented missile had struck Tezah in the calf of the leg and he was stoically examining the wound, which bled freely. Jimmy tossed him his handkerchief and he bound it up. Another bullet pinged against the side of the outlet and left a smear of lead plainly distinguishable in the light that was rapidly increasing to full day.

"Get into the inner room, Deborah!" he commanded.

She looked mutinous, but obeyed, steadying herself by her arm as she went through the low doorway into the chamber built against the solid rock.

Jimmy made a swift examination of their little fortress. It consisted of three rooms built so as to utilize the living rock of the wedge-shaped cavity for side and back walls. A partition of piled-up stones separated the two front rooms from the one to which Deborah had retreated. This reached up to the overhanging ledge.

Probably, he thought, the outer walls had once done the same, but now they were broken of line, making an irregular rampart, above which was a gap, jagged at the bottom, smooth where the firm rock sloped. Through this, later in the day, the sun would pour into the interior and make the place almost unendurable.

The only entrance was at the side at the head of the path up which they had come and which, fast as they had passed, had showed to Jimmy's eye some indication of leading higher up the cliff.

There were four loopholes facing the cañon, two in each main room, not counting the entrance. Tezah, favoring his wounded leg, down which the blood dripped

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steadily, began to block the latter waist-high with loose stones. When the breastwork was completed he lay behind it, his rifle muzzle through a hole he had purposely left, his keen eyes looking through another, in complete command of the approach.

From none of the loopholes could Jimmy catch a glimpse of the two Danes or their ponies, completely sheltered behind the great rock across the cañon. By piling up a platform he made himself a place from which he could watch for the approach of the third man, whom he expected to appear momentarily.

Whether he could stop him with his automatic was another matter. The ledge, he estimated, was at the least, eighty feet above the cañon floor, which was itself about the same distance across. If the rider hugged the opposite wall it meant a range of over thirty yards, and there were only a few spaces clear of boulders in which to sight his man.

He tried a sighting shot and the bullet fell a full foot below his mark. A second threw off far to the right at the end of the uncertain trajectory. A rifle shot came in swift answer, passing over his head, striking the rock above and dropping into the chamber. Such bullets were not apt to be dangerous; but, while their foes could not get in, much less could they themselves get out.

"Holed like a badger," thought Jimmy grimly. "And I am beginning to get thirsty. The thing to do is not to think about it, I suppose, but it's going to be tough presently for Tezah with that wound. As for Deborah, I'm afraid she's nearly all in already."

There was a flash of something shifting swiftly in the gap between the rock which hid the Danes and a neighboring one. The big boulders, bleached by the sun, were scattered over the old river-bed like a flock of sheep, the smallest well able to shelter a man who went on all fours. Nearer the cliff and below the cave they were not so numerous.

That would be the younger Dane, Jimmy figured. The old man could not be in any too good shape after the night's adventures. Watching intently, he wondered what the purpose of the sortie could be. For what seemed several minutes he could detect nothing. Then, with Jimmy's bullets hitting the dust close beside him, Dane darted swiftly across an open space and squatted behind a stone the size and somewhat the shape of a rolltop desk.

"If he goes any farther I'll make it warm for him," Jimmy muttered. "Show yourself, my murderous friend."

The barrel of Dane's rifle suddenly appeared and a shot was fired, evidently with random aim in the hope of diverting the enemy's attention, as Dane broke cover on the report and, bent double, ran toward the cliff. Jimmy's swift fusillade halted him, though none of the shots hit the moving mark, too far away for accuracy.

Dane fled back to the desk-like boulder and from that to the more closely connected rocks out of harm's way. Jimmy went back to Tezah in the adjoining room.

"Young Dane is trying to get to the cliff under us. Is there a path there that leads up here?"

"No, señor, the cliff falls straight. But below us is the big cave where the pictures of my tribe are on the walls to tell its greatness. In there is a water-hole. Perhaps they know of it."

"Water-hole!" At the mention of the word, Jimmy's mouth parched suddenly and his thirst clamored to be appeased. "Man, why didn't you take us there instead of here?"

He stood dumfounded at Tezah's stupidity.

"Because, señor, the entrance is only a crack in the rock. One must squeeze through slowly. While one entered they would have killed the rest."

It was a good answer, but the thought of a well of cool water, even of tepid, muddy liquid, lying under their feet, was torture. Jimmy hoped that Deborah had not overheard or understood. Then her voice called him.

"Did you say something about *agua*," she asked. "Because, if you did, I am terribly thirsty."

It smote Jimmy to the quick to deny her. He blamed himself utterly for having brought her to this mischance. For a few sentences he spoke almost incoherently.

"Oh, hush, hush," she said. "You have been wonderful, and you did it all for me. Is Tezah wounded badly? He must suffer far more than I do."

"Badly, but not seriously. I think he'll stand it better than we can, at that."

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"Who hit him? My—my brother?"

"Listen, I had almost forgotten." Jimmy spoke cheerily.

The news would divert her for the time, help her to pass the cruel hours to come.

"I'll have to watch while I tell you," he said. "I think it's safe for you to come into the outer room if you stay close to the wall."

He saw her face brighten as he related the brief sentences he had overheard from the veranda.

"Thank God," she said when he ended. "I sometimes wondered at the way I felt toward him, the man I thought was my father. He would never tell me anything about my mother, and Ben always evaded the subject. There were no pictures of her —no letters."

She fell to musing. Then she shuddered.

"And Ben wanted to marry me. That explains—many things. And he murdered Stimpson!"

Jimmy watched her narrowly. She was very pale and there were great circles about her eyes.

"We're past that breaker," he said lightly. "You are going to marry me."

She gave him the wraith of a smile, but did not answer.

A call came echoing down the cañon. Ben Dane answered it from his concealment. The third man was on his way to join them, having found no trail to indicate the flight of the fugitives.

Dane shouted a warning to him to dismount and keep under cover.

"Have you got any water?" he asked as the man answered.

"Yes."

"How much?"

"Two canteens."

Jimmy groaned in spirit as he noted Deborah's wistful face that she tried to twist into a smile. Their side of the cañon was in shadow, but their exertions had left them peculiarly susceptible to the lack of moisture in the sultry heat that was steadily growing greater.

"I'll spill if for them if I get a chance," he muttered, but he failed to get even a glimpse of the man until a shout from the big rock announced his safe arrival. Presently an additional aggravation, to Jimmy and the Indian, announced itself in the faint odor of tobacco.

The whole thing started with a cigar, thought Jimmy, and it looks as if it might end with a cigaret.

THE day dragged. Tezah's wound stiffened and a high fever began to inflame his tissues. He did not complain, but his glassy eyes showed his sufferings. Jimmy grew almost afraid to look at Deborah as noon passed with a shifting of the sun to their side of the cañon and the radiation of the walls slowly baked them. His own tongue was swollen and his lips cracked so that he spoke with difficulty, and the girl's plight kept him in a sympathetic agitation that was constant.

They were trapped. All that the Danes had to do was to stay outside for a few hours, twenty-four would see the end, Jimmy thought, and he would be obliged to capitulate for the sake of the girl.

He did not bother his head about his own fate in such a contingency, though he wondered whether it would not be better for the girl to die than to be delivered over to the Danes. He found some streaks of hope in the prospect, and to these he clung, backed by the signal that he had set flying nailed to the flagstaff of his determination by the grit that was so integral a part of his make-up.

"We'll jam through somehow."

Tezah was seated beside his rifle like a drowsy rattlesnake, the two bright eyes beneath the drooping lids flashing at every suspicious sound. Deborah had returned to the inner room and lay in a coma. Jimmy started to sum up the possibilities.

In the first place, the Danes could not stay there very long. They had been warned by Stimpson of trouble ahead. Both of them, plus the third man, wanted Jimmy out of the way, as witness to the murder and rival to Ben Dane. Ben Dane did not want Deborah killed of thirst. Sooner or later they would offer to capitulate. If the terms were not acceptable, and Jimmy felt no confidence that they would be, then, somehow or other, it was up to him to get water, food and help.

Tezah, with one leg practically out of commission, was no longer available as a scout. He sat down beside the old chief. His voice croaked as he spoke. His salivary glands had long ago ceased their functions, palate and cheeks and tongue seemed mushroomed together.

"This path," Jimmy pointed to the one

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outside the entrance that Tezah guarded, "it goes higher?"

"Yes, señor." The Indian's words were hardly distinguishable. "But the way is broken. Once there were ladders. Long ago. The path led to the Aco. It is above us. We are beneath its protection. We shall win clear at last, señor. The Aco will set us free."

Jimmy said nothing. The idea of a white stone stuck in the cliff above them having any power beyond that engendered by the priesthood of a superstitious race would under other circumstances have seemed laughable. When Tezah had proposed hiding in the cañon he had doubtless had the Aco in mind, and Jimmy mentally kicked himself for having followed the Indian's advice.

"How far did the path lead?"

"I know not, señor. Perhaps to the Aco. It was a priest-path. No one else would dare to use it. Not even I, the chief. And the ladders were taken down when the Pueblo people drove out my tribe from the cañon."

Priests, Jimmy reflected, were not always the most agile of the tribe. Where aged bones needed ladders, the desperate sinews of youth might find a way. If he could clamber to the top he could get food and water from the Curly O ranch-house. Ah Fung and the wounded man had been set free by the automobile driver by this time, he supposed. Perhaps they had gone to Aztec.

The man might have been naturally disgruntled at his comrades' desertion of him. Ah Fung was a coward. The determined sticking of the Danes to the siege of the cave under all the circumstances was stiffened, Jimmy believed, by the younger Dane. In their place, he figured, he would pretend to withdraw in the hope that the besieged would think the way clear. That would be done after nightfall. If he could win a way to the cliff-top by the priest-path and get ropes, food and water from the Curly O ranch-house, they might all manage to escape up the cliff.

It all crystallized to one conclusion. He, Jimmy, had to tackle the priest-path as soon as it was dark. On that resolve he rested and with it tried to bolster up the weary hours. The sun poured in through the gap between the ruined walls and the top of the cave and the heat grew unbearable. Shadows were merely a color distinction. The stones were hot enough to fry eggs on, Jimmy told himself—if they only had eggs. His automatic was blistering to the touch.

All of Tezah's vitality had vanished with the suffering from his wound. He looked like the mummy of some ancient cliff-dweller come out of the past to once more protest against the invasion of his cave. Only his eyelids twitched occasionally as he maintained his tireless watch. From the sweltering inner cave Jimmy could hear Deborah moaning faintly from time to time. Yet all he could do was to await darkness with what patience he could muster. With it would come relief from the heat in a swift drop of the temperature.

The sun's rays left the cave mouth at last and shifted upward across the great dial of the cliff. Twilight fell rapidly and night seemed to sweep down the cañon on dusty wings that trailed a veil behind.

From behind the big rock where the Danes kept their vigil a ruddy glow danced upon the cliff behind. They had found wood brought down by some cloudburst. The leaping fire had suggestions of food and tobacco and water, principally water, that held torment for the two watchers in the cave with cracked and puffy lips and swollen tongues. The girl was asleep.

One good swallow of water, thought Jimmy, would help me a long way up that cliff. He summoned his spirit and sat with it in conference. Then he marshaled every resource of his body and reviewed its strength. His head grew clear under the imperative mandate of his resolve, the thirst subsided and he felt the rally of his blood ordering the corpuscular regiments into line.

He motioned Tezah to one side and stepped lightly over the barrier in the doorway. The Danes had started a second fire in a space between two flanking rocks where it lit up the bottom of the trail. Above him the trail loomed uncertainly and, far up, he caught the gray patch of the Aco, the legendary white stone of Quetzal the god.

"Where are you going?" whispered Tezah huskily. "Not on the priest-path, señor. The ghosts will destroy you."

"If there are any ghosts up there," Jimmy made shift to answer, "I'll make them give me a hand. Stay here and look out for Deborah."

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While he stood flattened against the cliff he balanced the chances of a descent to the water-hole in the cave. But the hazard of passing the fire was too great. He turned to the ascent.

As he mounted he saw the Indian by the breastwork of the entrance, his arms outstretched to Aco, the whites of his eyes faintly visible in the starlit dusk.

CHAPTER XV

BEHIND THE ACO

THE priest-path was a different matter from the almost trackless way by which Tezah had piloted Jimmy up and down the cliff the night before. He found a well-defined and practical trail, long unused, crumbling in places, but for the most part either following a natural ledge or hewn from the solid rock. It was dust-covered, and he managed to zigzag noiselessly half way to the Aco before he came to a spot where the ledge ended abruptly.

As well as Jimmy could tell in the obscurity, it continued once more far above his head. Groping, he found deep excavations in the rock, three of them at regular intervals, in a slanting line, of the same size and apparently man-made. The highest one was half plugged by timber that crushed between his fingers. They were the sockets of an ancient ladder.

The face of the cliff was vertical. By using the holes for foot and hand holes a bold man could climb to the next stage. Somehow, will backing nerve and nerve forcing flesh and blood coordinating, he crept, clinging like a limpet across the precipice. Twice he hung precariously while one hand cleared a socket of decayed wood. Once a great wave of dizziness, born of thirst and hunger, nearly overmastered him and sent him plunging into the depths. The holes angled forward and backward tracing a letter "W" sideways on the up-and-down surface.

When Jimmy drew himself up to a continuation of the ledge, trembling and panting from his exertions, he calculated that the point he had reached was immediately above the one where he had found the first socket. The ladders had been slanted in such fashion, he surmised, to make the ascent easier for burden bearers.

A fairly good trail led once more toward the summit. Jimmy followed it until it stopped in front of the Aco, a mass of white quartz, irregularly faced, bulging out from the granite. His eyes were growing more used to the darkness. It seemed lighter near the summit and the color of the Aco aided his vision. Above it was a cleft in the precipice much like the chimney on the other trail. It split the cliff fairly to its top.

I can get through that, all right, Jimmy told himself, if I can get at it.

He surveyed the Aco more carefully. Its surface was bossed freely with projections that he thought he could negotiate. The stone was circular and inclined to convexity. Once past the center the way to the rift was easy.

It was no use looking at it. His fingers were raw and stiffened into hooks that he could straighten only with pain and difficulty, and at the core of his physical being something warned him that he was nearing the end of his strength, reserves and all.

"It's now or never," he muttered and tackled the climb, following the rim of the circle.

As he neared the line of its horizontal diameter he fancied the stone trembled slightly, but his own overstrained arteries made his senses unreliable. His ears were ringing, his eyes blurred and his head seemed split by a wedge that relentlessly sank deeper at every effort.

The cliff seemed to swing wildly and he hung tremblingly to the uneven portions of the rock. It oscillated, out and back again, then, as Jimmy desperately scrambled toward the rift above him the Aco swung as on a pivot, suddenly shot forward and leaped into space. Jimmy, sliding down the smoothed inner surface of the rock as it broke loose from whatever delicately balanced trigger had held it in place, found himself lying in the gorge of a tunnel that the sacred stone had blocked. He heard the shattering crash of the Aco far below and crept to the lip of the tunnel mouth, gazing fearfully downward.

The Danes were firing, two at the cliff-dwelling, another upward toward the source of the falling rock. Tezah's rifle rang out in answer.

Good man, thought Jimmy. They may think this is a natural accident as long as they imagine we're still in the cave. He lay still until the firing ceased and proved

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his reasoning correct. He got to his feet and looked for the rift. It had vanished with the fall of the Aco.

The natural cave had been enlarged by man into a bore too smooth to climb, like the muzzle of a cannon of which the Aco had formed the plug. About it the rock was almost as smooth as glass. From the top of the Aco he might have reached the cleft, now, left within the cave-mouth, he could not even see it. Nothing was to be done but to return or explore the tunnel.

He felt a draft of cold, refreshing air issuing from the black throat. The ground pitched downward as he ventured in. Ten feet from the entrance timbers partly blocked the tunnel. He kicked at them and some of them fell in fragments.

Jimmy felt for his match-safe and, carefully shielding the tiny flame from the remote possibility of its being seen from below, tried one of the splinters of the broken gateway as a torch. It burned quickly but well and he tossed it ahead on the floor of the tunnel. Rock-vaulted, it seemed to run far into the cliff, slanting steadily downward. As the torch flared the darkness back of it took apparent shape and a multitude of wings fanned the brand as a flock of bats rushed outward with a musky odor that was overpowering.

He collected a load of the wooden fragments and, lighting them one by one, as soon as he had progressed twenty feet into the tunnel, walked rapidly down the passage that nature had started as a rift in the cooling rock walls after fire and earthquake had reared them. Man had adapted them to his own punier and more devious devices by toil that must have taken the efforts of hundreds for as many months.

Even when Jimmy grew later more familiar with the labyrinth he marveled at its extent. Now, in his fast failing strength, the way seemed interminable. Far into the gullet of the cliff the corridor opened into a circular chamber, lifting too high above his head for the torchlight to discover a roof, remnants of ruined ladders clinging to the walls.

AS, FOR the moment, he paused irresolute, he heard somewhere in the dark the staccato *drip-drip* of falling water. A myriad thirst-devils attacked him in force, seeming to materialize from the blackness. He reeled on and entered a high tunnel at the farther end of the chamber, his senses vaguely telling him that the rough rock had been worn smooth by the passing of the feet of many generations. He stopped to light a fresh torch splinter and, as the new light flared and the old, cast on the floor, leaped up, he caught sight of a mass of masonry to his right with the stones hand-piled and cemented.

One foot crunched through the moldering ribs of a skeleton, the other with a muffled thud of a skull that crumbled at the kick. For a hundred feet he stumbled through a charnel-house of bones piled in the passage. Here and there a skeleton stood upright against the tunnel wall in grisly sentinel fashion. One of these standing Deaths toppled as he passed it, its arms striking him, the skull toppling from the vertebræ and the bony cheek-plates brushing his face.

Had Jimmy been less desperately clinging to the remnant of his vitality, brain and nerve subsidized to the physical effort of following the lure of the water, his courage might have left him a demented wanderer in the hall of death; but, whether it was a phantom conjured by hope, or a mocking echo, the *drip-drip* of flowing liquid sounded clear ahead and a regiment of moldering skeletons could not have withstood the instinctive drive of his despairing body for the saving element.

The tunnel narrowed, widened, narrowed again and slanted swiftly downward at so sharp an angle that he had hard work to keep his balance at the automatically accelerated pace. A level floor rose up in the dark to meet him, the air grew suddenly colder and sweet and he was conscious of wide spaces all about him. Straight to the sound of water he went as filings to a magnet, his torch held high above his head.

Its light was caught in the sparkle of a thread of water dripping from ledge to ledge and splashing into the inky contents of a rock-bound pool. Alkali water would have seemed nectar to Jimmy at that moment and the spring water seemed to inject itself into his veins with every sip as if the cavern cistern were a veritable fountain of youth. The torch on the ground beside him, he crouched like a wild beast and lapped the brimming liquid, sousing his neck and head with it, rising at last invigorated and restrung.

His spirit smote him with a charge of

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selfishness, absurd though the idea was, at the thought of his relief and the girl's enduring torment, and Tezah's. He looked around him in the wild hope of finding some receptacle in which he could carry water to them before they essayed the climb to this safer retreat.

The torchlight lit up crude drawings in red and black upon the walls, pictures of men and beasts, faded portrayals, many of them, of extinct animals, at once the picture-gallery and the library of the cave-dwellers.

The remembrance of the talk on the Curly O veranda flashed upon him. This cave must be the place where the Shepherd had said the "outfit" was buried, the cave Tezah had mentioned. And from it there must be an exit to the cañon. Jimmy's brains, revived by his body's saturation, gaged the possibilities.

The Danes might enter. It was not likely they would do so as long as they believed their quarry cooped up in the cliff-dwelling. Evidently they did not know of the opening behind the Aco. Tezah's fire from the cliff house would keep them confident of having retained command of the situation.

He swept the torch around in a circle. There were traces of a fire close to the pool, a little pile of unburned wood, a pack-saddle and—Jimmy's heart leaped at the sight—two coils of rope. On a rock-shelf utilized as a cupboard were a few cans of provisions and a battered kettle. A miner's candlestick was thrust into a crevice, a few inches of the candle still in the socket and, beneath it, rested a shovel.

Jimmy did not waste time in an endeavor to find the entrance. Tezah would know where that was. He slung the coils of rope about him, stuffed a can of tomatoes and one of beef into his pockets, filled the kettle and retraced his steps up the incline, through the passage of skeletons, and the wall of masonry, across the circular chamber and up once more through the bore to its muzzle, where the night air blew warningly against the flicker of his torch and above the dark cliff across the cañon, the stars twinkled in the free air.

One of the posts of the ancient gateway was still sound and firm. To it Jimmy swiftly fastened the two coils of rope, knotting them at foot intervals before he let them lead to the rim of the cliff where the Aco had been and dangle down to the path. He slung the kettle canteenwise and prepared to descend. The camp-fire of the Danes glowed behind the big rock, but the men were out of sight even from the height. They were singing. In the calm night the derisive lilt of it rolled up to him:

In a cañon by a river
In a deep and dark ravine,
Dwelt a miner, forty-niner,
And his daughter, Clementine.

Then the raucous chorus of men whose voices had been unleashed by drink:

Oh, my darling! oh, my darling!
Oh, my darling, Clementine!
You are dead and gone forever,
Dreffful sorry, Clementine.

Jimmy gritted his teeth as he let himself down by the ropes, hand after hand, his feet feeling for holds, striking now and then one of the ladder sockets by which he had climbed up. Deborah, he hoped, was still unconscious in the half swoon, half sleep, in which he had left her. Below the Danes and their helper were chanting in mockery:

Drivin' ducks down to the water,
Drivin' ducks into the brine,
When she stumbled—in she tumbled,
Dead and drown-ded, Clementine.

The pull of the canteen against his shoulders reconciled Jimmy somewhat to the ballad with the ironical reference to cañons with water in them. His feet found the priest-path as the chorus broke out again:

Oh, my darling! oh, my darling!

It'll keep the fools occupied, he told himself, as he sped down the trail, made its angle and reached the cliff-dwelling. He was barely in time. Tezah had succumbed at last to the fever of his wound and lack of food and water, and sprawled in the entrance with his rifle free of his nerveless hand. The Danes could have entered at will.

Jimmy stepped across the Indian, sprinkling him as he passed with a blessing from the spout of the battered kettle and went in to the inner chamber where Deborah lay.

His heart stood still as he put the kettle down and listened in vain for her breathing. Had she died while he was wallowing in

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the spring? He struck a match and saw the pallid oval of her face fringed by its flame of hair above the pitiful huddle of her body. The once scarlet lips were purple, swollen and broken, the tip of her swollen tongue protruded between her teeth.

A deadly fear that he had beaten back a hundred times in his struggle to the water, brought the sweat to his forehead and a swift pang of agony to his heart. Outside the men were still repeating their maudlin chorus:

> You are dead and gone forever,
> Dreffful sorry, Clementine.

Red rage swept over him.

"—— them," he said aloud, "if she's dead, if they've killed her, I'll go down there and clear them out. I'll get them through the big cave and surprise them. I'll tie them up to scorch to death in the sun with bowls of water all about them!"

As he muttered he knelt by Deborah, the swift match-light gone, and poured water prodigally upon her face, lifting it to his lap as he changed position, calling softly to her to come back to life again.

CHAPTER XVI

TEZAH MAKES A FIND

THERE was the sou d of a croaking voice behind him.

"Señor," said Tezah, "I swooned and I thought it had rained and awakened me. Was it water you brought?"

Jimmy was oblivious to the appeal in the Indian's voice.

"I have water," he said, "but it is of no use, Tezah. She is dead."

"No, señor, not yet. She was too young and strong to die so easily. I should have died first. Where is the water?"

Afterward Jimmy remembered that the thirst-tortured chief did not drink until they had brought Deborah back to consciousness. Yet the splashing gurgle of the liquid in the half-filled kettle must have called to every shrunken fiber of his being. And he, Jimmy, the white man, had drunk. If he had not he could never have come back to them, but somehow in the abnegation of the Indian, the excuse seemed a paltry subterfuge.

"A wet cloth, señor, to her lips," croaked Tezah. "And water on her wrists and ankles—so."

They worked in silence. Then the tense jaws relaxed, the girl's body shifted as the pulses reacted to the chill of the water, and Deborah moaned. Automatically she sucked at the soaked strip of cloth. Jimmy poured water into the lid of the kettle, spilling it in the darkness but guiding it to her lips, one arm about her neck.

"Not too much, señor," gasped Tezah

The rasp of his voice brought Jimmy to a realization of the other's endurance.

"Drink, Tezah," he said.

"*Gracias*, señor."

"Jimmy?"

He caught the faint whisper and bent his face to hers.

"Yes, sweetheart. Drink a little. Presently you shall have more. And food."

Youth's elasticity rebounded promptly. Within ten minutes the girl sat up against the crumbling wall and filled her mouth with the grateful pulp from the can of tomatoes that Jimmy hacked open with his knife while Tezah held the match.

From what mysterious asset the ancient tribesman drew upon for a renewal of vigor, it was hard to fathom, but the glaze in his eyes changed to a glitter of fresh purpose and, with a share of the canned beef he crawled back to his post again. Presently, as Deborah grew stronger, they joined him and Jimmy told them of his discovery.

"If you can manage it," he said, "we may be able to get into the cañon and win clear. Or we can surprise them perhaps, though if we can get by without fighting it will be better not to risk it. How about your leg, Tezah?"

"I can manage, señor. The Aco has fallen. Quetzal has shown the way. I can pass along it. More than that, señor——"

He broke off and fired down the dim trail. Jimmy could see nothing but the savage keenness had caught sight of two dim shapes more solid than the shadows in which they tried to merge themselves. There was the swift scurry of shoes on shingle, a return shot fired from the protection of the rock and the sortie ended by Jimmy firing a random bullet from his automatic.

"Just to let them know we are all here," he said.

Then they took counsel.

"It grows colder," said Tezah. "By midnight they will hug the fire more closely.

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They have been singing as men do who drink. The liquor will make them sleepy. They will watch the bottom of the trail but, if we rest awhile and go very softly, they will not see us climb. From below the priest-path does not show."

They ate the rest of the food and finished the water. Then they sat quietly, Deborah's hand in Jimmy's, Tezah motionless, recruiting strength for the ordeal of the climb.

The fire died down, was replenished and died down again to a mere glimmer. In the hope that they might avoid the climb, Jimmy stole down the trail, trusting that the watchers had fallen asleep. Halfway his foot hit a stone in the darkness.

It made but little noise but there was a flash and the crack of a rifle as a bullet smacked against the cliff within a foot of his head. He got back in safety, chagrined in one way, elated in another. The attempt would strengthen the idea that there was only one way of escape open.

They waited for half an hour by Jimmy's watch before they started and gained the foot of the dangling ropes without alarm. Jimmy swung to one and guided the girl's feet to the ladder holes as she angled backward and forward to the lip of the tunnel. Then he returned to aid Tezah. Not a murmur escaped the Indian though he had but little use of his wounded leg. They entered the tunnel, Tezah hobbling along with his rifle as a support. They passed the circular chamber and reached the corridor of skeletons.

Through this dreadful avenue, lit by the flaming torch, Deborah hurried with shudders as her feet broke through the brittle bones. Tezah's face was filled with awe but twice he stooped and picked up something that he tucked away in the long scarf that served him for a belt. At the pool Jimmy forced Deborah to lie down on the sand that carpeted the place. Tezah pointed out the exit. As he had said, it was a narrow and tortuous passage with the final outlet a low triangle, to pass which even the girl would have to stoop.

Tezah peered into the pitch of the lower cañon then gestured Jimmy to his place.

THE angle of vision partly concealed the fire behind the rock. It was burning brightly once more and he could hear the sound of voices. His attempt to pass by the lower trail had forced them to alertness once again. The cliff was painted deep orange by the flare and on this background showed the shadows of both the Danes, the Shepherd with his patriarchal beard and the bull neck and broad shoulders of the son and the tossing heads of the two horses.

The fire reflection was not limited to the area immediately surrounding it. The fresh fuel sent it dancing across the cañon splitting up the night into sectional shadows and resting on the rim of the egress where Jimmy crouched. To emerge would be to stand for a moment in the ruddy glare. The slightest sound, the click of a pebble, the drag of Tezah's leg on the shingle would betray them before they could get clear. The firelight flickering on the rock beside him was so bright that Jimmy looked at his watch.

It was twenty minutes to two. Two and a half hours more would bring the dawn to the cañon's rim, another thirty minutes would dissipate the dusk in the ravine. Then the hole where the Aco had once stood would be evident to the Danes and their retreat would be discovered. It might have been better, thought Jimmy, if he had taken all the provisions down to the cliff-dwelling and they had stood siege from there. But it was too late now for the change and Tezah could not have stood a second day in that natural oven even if Deborah could have done so.

He wondered where they had buried Stimpson and where they had cached the boxes brought from the cañon. As he pondered he caught the chatter of Tezah's teeth. The Indian's impoverished and scanty blood was hard put to it to resist the biting cold that Jimmy suddenly became conscious of.

Deborah must be suffering in the cave. He whispered to Tezah to return and build a fire near the cavern well. The turnings of the entrance would effectually screen its glimmer from the cañon. The chief took his matches and departed.

Jimmy watched on, straining to catch the words of the men by the fire. The blaze was burning more quietly and now and then he distinguished a word or a sentence that gave him the general drift of the talk. The Shepherd seemed to be advising his son of the danger of too long delay and the latter scoffed at his suggestions. Finally a sentence broke clear as the younger Dane raised his voice.

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"I'll not leave without Deborah and that's flat. And Hollister's mouth has got to be shut for keeps. As for the Indian——"

The last words were indistinguishable as was the growling answer of the Shepherd. Jimmy felt the touch of a hand on his arm and Deborah's breath close to his cheek as she whispered.

"I'm warm now. Let me watch. You must be nearly frozen."

She insisted on it and promised to retreat at the first indication of alarm. Jimmy found Tezah replenishing the fire, feeding it carefully with scraps of wood that he groped for on the floor of the cave. Suddenly he uttered a low exclamation and held up something for Jimmy's inspection.

It was a disc of yellow metal, bright in the light of the flame, a newly minted twenty-dollar gold-piece. At the sight and feel of it inspiration came to Jimmy. He thrust a brand into the blaze until the end burned bravely and began an inspection of the wall paintings. The torch had nearly sputtered to an end before he found the petroglyph he was looking for, the rough yet spirited drawing of an Indian shooting arrows into a bison.

The sand was soft though packed, and digging was easy with the shovel left in the cave by the Danes. About four feet below the surface metal struck metal. The secret of the buried "outfit," of the boxes packed from the cañon, the "stuff" that Deborah had unwittingly carried in the trunks, the ring of the double-eagles that night at Stimpson's ranch, was revealed by the uncovering of the cache. The Danes were counterfeiters. Molds, a furnace and the tools of a minting equipment were buried in the sand.

There was no use in Deborah's seeing them, Jimmy decided. She would feel herself involved in the crime. While Tezah watched and nursed his leg, forbidden by Jimmy to assist, the latter reburied the evidence and smoothed down the sand. The work warmed him and he was glowing as he replaced the pick and spade just as Deborah came across the cave to the ring of firelight.

Dawn was coming, she announced, and their enemies were astir. Jimmy went back to the entrance, the girl behind him. The black night had turned purple. Every tick of his watch saw the purple turn to gray and the narrow ribbon of radiance on the eastern brink that he could just see by twisting his neck, widen as the sun lifted. A horse neighed shrilly. Down the cañon the horse of the third man answered.

The voice of the third man rang out sharply. He seemed to have been watching the trail to the cliff-dwelling. The few words smote Jimmy with self-reproach.

"Look at those ropes!"

In their hurried retreat they had left the lines dangling after Tezah had made the tunnel back of the Aco. There was an oath from young Dane and Jimmy heard the clutter of his movements behind the big rock. He had gone up to the cliff-dwelling.

"Go back to Tezah," said Jimmy to Deborah. "See if he can walk. Perhaps we can slip away."

She left him. The rock still masked the movements of the besiegers though in their excitement their speech was plainly heard. Young Dane came back from the cliff-dwelling.

"They've all gone up the cliff," he shouted. "That hole leads to our cave. They got our kettle from it and some of the grub."

"——!"

The Shepherd's bass supplied the oath.

The light strengthened rapidly. Mist swirled in the bottom of the cañon like smoke. A rifle-barrel appeared 'round the rock followed by the Shepherd's beard and then Dane's face swiftly ducking as he crouched behind the barrier of two boulders from which he could command the entrance to the big cave. Jimmy was out of position and his bullet sped too late. They were effectually blockaded.

"Are you hurt?"

Jimmy reassured Deborah, who had brought the news that Tezah's leg had stiffened overnight so that he could barely crawl.

"No chance of traveling yet," said Jimmy. "They've got us corraled. But we've got food and water and we'll be able to keep cool. Tell Tezah to cover the passage we came through in case they try to tackle us that way."

He could see the muzzle of the Shepherd's Winchester like a menacing, unwinking eye from between the boulders. The siege was still on.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE SHOT IN THE CAÑON

BEFORE Deborah reached Tezah, Hollister thought of a better plan. It was possible that by daylight he might be able to get at the besiegers from the mouth of the Aco tunnel if they showed themselves in the open. It was foolish to leave the ropes hanging there in any event.

He posted Deborah at the cave mouth with his automatic and strict instructions not to expose herself to a chance shot from the Shepherd's rifle. If she kept well out of sight they would think that Jimmy himself was on guard, he figured, and they knew his shooting well enough to be respectful of it. He took Tezah's rifle, hurried back to the Aco gap and crawling to the edge, looked down.

He could see nothing of the Danes. One of the horses was partly visible but he refrained from firing at the dumb brute. The cliff was fairly vertical, so sheer in its first descent from where he lay that it was hard for him to aim across the acute angle of the ledge with any precision save at the base of the opposite wall. By cautiously craning out to the danger-point he could look down at the trail that led to the cliff-dwelling.

Moving back, he hauled in the telltale ropes. The action passed unnoticed, to his surprise. He stood in the mouth of the tunnel, coiling the lines, preparatory to the descent, when a shot roared in the cañon near the head of the draw, its sound split into a hundred echoes between the cliffs. Another answered it from farther down. There was the scurrying clatter and ring of horses' hoofs racing over and among boulders at top speed, coming from both directions.

Jimmy saw the Shepherd catch at the bridle of the exposed horse and mount. His son appeared beside him. The horse of the third man came dashing up the ravine. It stepped on its dangling bridle and crashed to the ground as its owner ran toward it.

Suddenly the arms of both the Danes flew upward and stayed there. Pigmied by the distance they looked like jumping-jacks jerked by a hidden string. Two stern words of command floated upward to Jimmy.

"Hands up!"

Four horsemen rode up with leveled rifles and surrounded the Danes. On the blue shirt of one of them Jimmy caught the glitter of a metal badge. He could see three more farther down the cañon riding between the boulders as he gazed at the little drama like a spectator in a theater gallery. The third man had dropped behind a rock and, leaving his horse, started to crawl toward the cliff.

Apparently the posse were uncertain of the size of the party and, for the moment, he went unseen, disappearing from Jimmy's line of vision until the latter wriggled to the edge and saw him directly below, scurrying along the trail to the cliff-dwelling, bent almost double, his rifle at the carry.

There was a shout from the man with the metal badge of office and a cry to the fugitive to stop. Almost at the doorway he stretched out a hand to climb over the barrier Tezah had erected. One of the newcomers raised a quick rifle and fired. The man straightened to full height, spun about with wildly clutching hands and, as his rifle fell, followed it, rolling down the trail a few feet and then plunging to the bottom as the rest of the posse rode up.

It was evidently the timely arrival of the pursuit that Stimpson had feared. Would the Danes tell of their reason for being in the cañon? Did the man with the badge—he would be the sheriff, Jimmy decided—already know? Deborah would be implicated. He turned and sped through the tunnel, blundering along, striking a match now and then to guide him.

He must get Deborah away—he could carry Tezah—perhaps the Indian might know of some hiding-place—they could scramble up one of the ladders in the circular chamber or burrow somewhere in the labyrinth. The chance of chivalry enough in the nature of the Danes to shield the girl was remote. Ben Dane would know he was leaving her to Hollister!

With such thoughts crowding his brain Jimmy arrived breathless in the big cave and, guided by the fire, sprang across to the entrance. Tezah lay in a doze unconscious of what had happened. Jimmy clawed his way to the exit. The girl was crouching in the triangular opening. She turned wide-eyed at his approach.

"Come back," he whispered. "Quickly!"

She obeyed him, not speaking till they reached the cave.

"They've gone," she said.

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"Gone!"

"Down the cañon and taken them with them. They killed Carl, I think. He was lying across his saddle."

"Down the cañon, you say. Then we can get over to my place. Tezah!"

He aroused the Indian and explained matters.

"You'll be safe here for a while," he said. "I'll come back for you with a pony as soon as I can."

The chief acquiesced without comment and Jimmy hurried the girl from the cave and up the cañon.

"Why can't we fetch Tezah right away?" she asked. "He must be suffering and his wound ought to be properly dressed."

Jimmy looked at her without slackening speed. She knew nothing of the gold-piece in his pocket and the counterfeiting outfit.

"They may be looking for you," he said. "They may think you were mixed up in whatever they wanted them for."

She stopped, panting for breath. They were halfway to the top of the cañon.

"I was," she cried. "They must have found Jerry at the ranch and Ah Fung. They would tell. There is the murder of Stimpson besides. They will try to bring you into it. I must not be seen with you. You will be arrested for trying to protect me. Let me go——"

She struggled to pass him, close to a breakdown, her endurance vanishing in hysteria. Jimmy gripped her by the wrists.

"Nonsense," he said. "You had nothing to do with it except innocently."

"They won't believe that. Let me go. I told you not to come to Aztec."

"Where do you want to go?"

"Back to the cave. Anywhere!"

"Listen."

He held her firmly with one hand and slipped his free arm about her waist.

"You are coming with me. You have done nothing wrong. I am going to get you clear. We'll go back East. Everything can be arranged."

She still struggled, the pupils of her eyes dilated, unheeding. Jimmy saw she did not comprehend his words and suddenly he stooped and kissed her full on the lips.

"I am not going to let you go," he said. "Be sure of that. Don't get frightened."

Her eyes welled over and her mouth quivered.

"You will take care of me?" she asked in the voice of a child. "But you mustn't kiss me. You mustn't pretend to love me. I—I am so tired."

She leaned against him with a sigh, utterly worn out, clinging to him pitifully, her knees failing her, sliding through his embrace.

He took her up in his arms as he had carried Tezah and clambered on to the rim, soothing her with little phrases of comfort. It was no time to talk of love, he saw that plainly. She was still obsessed with the idea of an unworthy taint that clung to her. She lay limp to his strength, sobbing.

At the head of the cañon she recovered herself.

"Put me down," she said. "I can walk now."

EVERYTHING was peaceful at Capricorn Lodge. The goats were grazing quietly and Solo was at the spring with Tezah's pony. Jimmy made some strong coffee and forced her to share it. It brought the color back to her cheeks and light to her eyes though she persistently avoided his gaze.

"How long will it take them to get here—if they come?" she asked presently.

Jimmy considered.

"I think Ah Fung and Jerry must have got clear in the automobile," he said. "If that is the case and they know anything about you they will think you went with them. For some reason the Shepherd and Ben have not talked, probably because they don't want to do anything to bring my evidence into the case. They may figure that the sheriff will take them out on an early train and that they can dodge the murder of Stimpson. They've buried him and the boxes safely, I imagine.

"In any case we have several hours to spare. We'll take the ponies and I'll leave you on Diablo while I ride down and bring Tezah back. We can't go blindly into Aztec. The best thing to do will be to make for Floravista or camp out until I can scout 'round, see if the coast is clear and find out the situation. It might be best to stay here at the ranch. We can talk that over later. The first thing is to get Tezah."

She seemed to have gained full control of herself and Jimmy mounted her on Solo, who proved docile. He took Tezah's cayuse and they rode off to the peak. Deborah was silent and Jimmy watched her

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sympathetically, wishing she would let him share the thoughts that showed their trend in the sadness of her face and eyes. But he decided to be patient though his heart ached to console her, to take her in his arms and kiss away the solitude with which she had environed herself.

It was a lonely prospect that she conjured up, he guessed. Bereft of even the barren props of a false father and brother, determined to consider herself unworthy of his love and comfort, the edifice of her future must seem desolate indeed.

He left her on the ledge where he had first found her after his arrival at Aztec, gazing dry-eyed to the distant range across the arid lands.

"You'll stay here until I come back with Tezah?" he asked. "I'll need your help in fixing him up."

She turned a weary face toward him, seeming to bring back her thoughts from a far journey.

"Yes; I'll be here."

He rode off on Solo after lengthening the stirrups, leading the Indian's pony, relieved. For a moment he was suspicious that she might do something desperate in her self-abandonment while he was gone.

Tezah was still beside the fire. He had cleansed his wound in the cold water of the well and bound it up. As Jimmy entered he looked up cheerily.

"The fever has gone out of the wound, señor," he said. "We will gather herbs and it will soon be well. The señorita is safe?"

Jimmy nodded. Tezah improvised a cane from the dry wood in the cave and, with Hollister's assistance, hobbled from the cave and mounted his pony, refreshed by a long pull from the whisky Jimmy had thought to bring from the ranch. His eyes held fire and he carried his head high, his wizened but tough frame seeming little the worse for their adventures.

Of the two he showed less weariness, thought Jimmy, acutely conscious now of his stiffened muscles and raw hands. As they rode on in the heat the need of sleep fought with his will until he nodded in the saddle. Tezah's voice, with an odd ring of triumph in it, aroused him.

"Did I not say, señor, that the treasure of Yojilla would not be found until the Aco fell. Look—I found these as we passed through the skeletons. That passage was the burial-place of dead priests, placed there to guard the mine."

"The mine?"

Jimmy resolutely blinked away the heaviness from his lids.

"Yes, señor. I told you it was walled up. We passed the stones. Behind them is the lost mine. I picked those up outside the wall."

Jimmy turned over the specimens of turquoise matrix, veined and starred with gold.

"There is much of it?" he queried.

"Yes, señor. So the priest told my father's father. You are a rich man, señor."

"I? Why it is yours. You are the chief of the Yojillas."

"It is yours, señor. What would I do with gold. If it is mine, I give it to you. But it is not. It was you who climbed the priest's path guarded by Quetzal. It was for you the Aco fell and left you unharmed. The ghosts of the dead did not assail you. They let you pass in peace. I am the last of the Yojillas and an old man who wants only fire and food and peace. It is yours, señor."

"It belongs equally to the three of us perhaps," said Jimmy. "We found it together. A third for the señorita, a third for you and a third for me."

"There is plenty for all," said the chief. "If you wish me to have a part of it I will take it so that I may make a gift to your children. Yours and the senorita's."

It was a golden vision that Tezah conjured up. Jimmy heaved a great breath of desire and hope for its fulfilment as they reached the top of the trail and headed for Diablo.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SUSPICION OF THE SHERIFF

ONCE at Capricorn Lodge, Tezah's wound was dressed and Jimmy made him comfortable on a couch while Deborah, still very quiet, got ready an ample meal. Tezah insisted upon hobbling to the table and refused to allow the girl to make an invalid of him.

Deborah listened in silence as Jimmy discussed plans for getting out of the vicinity before the officers became active in identifying them with the Curly O outfit. When he paused for her opinion she answered in a voice firm with determination.

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"I have made up my mind what to do," she said. "I am going to accept your help to get to Denver. I must. I have to borrow the fare."

She made a failure of her laugh and Jimmy gulped at the droop of her lips and the apathy in her eyes.

"I have friends there," she went on, "who will help me to get a position of some sort and keep me until I can repay them—and you."

"But you are not poor." Jimmy produced the specimens. "We are rich—the three of us. The old mine of the Aco is in the tunnel by the skeletons, back of the wall we passed. I still consider that Tezah has first claim to it as the chief of the Yojillas but he insists that but for us it would never have been discovered. So we are going to divide it into three equal parts.

"Tezah is adamant," he went on quickly, sensing her dissent. "If we won't take it today he is going to will it to us. We can't escape him. Besides he needs our aid to develop it."

"Your aid, not mine," said Deborah. "You found the tunnel. I have no claim upon it. I can not accept it."

For a moment Jimmy would have liked to shake her. Her abnegation was exasperating. So was Tezah's presence. He glanced at the Indian and the chief's shrewd old eyes seemed to twinkle as he took the hint and, muttering something about "the goats," left the room despite Deborah's protest.

When he was gone Jimmy looked at her steadily until her face grew scarlet and her lids drooped.

"I hardly know what to say to you, Deborah. I am so afraid of making a mistake. My happiness hangs upon it and I think yours as well. Why do you want to go away from me? What can you do in the world alone? I love you. I believe you love me, or your lips lied when they met mine. You know I came to Aztec for your sake. Perhaps I have done something—enough to ask for a reward. You are free from the Danes. You know you are not of their blood.

"We have gone through danger together. We have been comrades in peril. If you cared—as I care, Deborah—why not be comrades now that the peril has passed? If you will tell me you do not care—why, that ends it. I will take you to Denver and give you to the friends you prefer to ask favors of."

He tried to keep the bitterness out of his voice but his face was haggard as he sat facing her, his hands folded tightly, his gaze compelling hers.

"Oh, you make it hard—hard," she said. "When the glamour of all this peril that we shared has died out you will realize what I am trying to tell you. How could I come to you—to your father—in the consciousness of my association with the Danes? It has been almost the same as if I was his daughter only—now I am nameless. I do not know of what stock I came save that it is likely to be one to be ashamed of. I am liable to arrest—I—I——"

"Tell me you do not care for me, Deborah."

She tried to meet the challenge.

"What is love for if it is not to believe, not to shield and protect. If you were ten times the Shepherd's daughter it would make no difference. I know you are stainless. If there is any smirch upon your parentage, which I do not believe, there is none upon you. What kind of man do you think my father is—or I am? Come."

He stood up, his arms open. She dropped her head on her arms. Then she raised a tear-stained face.

"No," she said resolutely. "Not with the perpetual fear in my heart of something that might kill our happiness. It would choke love. If I could come, Jimmy"—there was a pitiful little catch in her voice as she spoke his name that made him step toward her but she shrank back—"if I could come—I would."

THE door opened and Tezah hobbled swiftly in.

"The sheriff, señor. They are coming."

Jimmy jumped to the veranda. His field-glasses hung against the wall. He focused them on the rapidly moving dots. Five men were riding swiftly toward the ranch. A fleck of flame flashed from the badge on the breast of the one in the lead.

He ran back into the room.

"It's too late to try and get away," he said. "That is my fault, Deborah. Go up-stairs."

His imperative tone startled her but she obeyed. He swept the table of the evidence of three having made a meal, putting the

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extra dishes into a cupboard in the kitchen. Deborah's hat with its sun veil about it was on the sideboard. He opened the inner door and tossed it up the stairs. Deborah was on the upper landing.

"They are here, señor," whispered Tezah.

He made a warning gesture to the girl and took his place at the table, filling his pipe. Tezah he motioned to a chair by the stove. As the men rode up outside he suddenly remembered the counterfeit double-eagle in his pocket and, taking off the stove-lid, dropped it into the redwood ashes, turning to the door as the sheriff knocked.

"Come in," he cried.

The sheriff of San Juan County came in, his spurs clinking, two revolvers swung forward on his hips. He was tall, black-eyed and black-haired, hawk-nosed above a trailing mustache.

"Mornin'," he said with a pleasantness that did not disguise his businesslike manner. "You folks breakfastin'. Kind of late, ain't ye? Or is it early luncheon?"

"Breakfast," said Jimmy. "Up last night with the goats. Trouble with the kidding. Will you sit in? I can get something in a jiffy."

"Thanks, no," said the sheriff drily. "There's quite a crowd of us."

"Have a cup of coffee."

Jimmy thought he might gage the other's friendliness or hostility by the offer but he used it as a cover under which to watch the sheriff's keen glance that swept the room from ceiling to floor, resting for the fraction of a second on an object that made Jimmy's jaws clamp. It was a leather glove, palm up, just under the table, Deborah's glove, far too small for any pretense of male ownership. The sheriff's glance passed on. He refused the coffee but took a chair, leaning forward in apparent confidence.

"Know much about your neighbors?" he asked.

"The Curly O?"

Jimmy patted himself mentally for the delightfully casual tone he produced.

He was perfectly cool, in the face of Deborah's danger and felt a keen pleasure in the game now forward in which the sheriff had moved the first pawn.

"Not much. I traded goat for beef once but they didn't seem to like my company and I felt the same way about it."

"Ah! Who did you see?"

"Old man Dane, his son and a couple of other men."

"No girl?"

Jimmy looked at him with eyes frank beyond question.

"Nothing feminine on the horizon."

And as he blandly lied, he remembered the print gown he had seen blowing on the line at the Curly O.

"Ah! So you didn't like 'em? You showed good judgment. Your name's Hollister, ain't it?"

"Jimmy Hollister. Goatman."

"I've heard about your goats. You're a friend of Jimmy Amber, ain't you? Well, he's a friend of mine. And I'm inclined to be a friend of any friend of his. You *sabe?*"

Jimmy *sabe'd* the emphasis on the "inclined" and nodded.

"You're well rid of your neighbors, Hollister. I've got two of 'em outside."

He looked at Jimmy with hard shrewd eyes that failed to find a blench.

"They're going a long ways. I'm startin' 'em. I thought maybe you might have seen the girl. She's pretty I understand. The whole crowd of 'em have been mixed up in counterfeiting with a chap named Stimpson. Old man Dane, as you call him—we call him the Shepherd."

He paused.

"So Amber told me," said Jimmy. He did not know how much the sheriff might have learned of his life before he came to Aztec and he resolved that a little honesty was the best policy.

"The Shepherd has been shoving the queer for a long time. He's dodged 'round pretty clever from place to place till he found this hide-out. The stuff he turned out was first class. We found a lot of it buried on his ranch yesterday before we rounded them up in the cañon."

Jimmy wondered if that was all they had unearthed and he thought of the gold-piece safely in the stove but he said nothing.

"Stimpson came up here with a Chinaman," went on the sheriff. "He's disappeared. So has the Chink, and there's another missing, one of the two you saw on the ranch. I fancy Stimpson had wind of trouble. He skipped out from his place near Colorado Springs in a hurry. If he warned 'em, some of 'em may have got clear. The Shepherd took his bunch down cañon to cache the outfit, I reckon. There was no molds or furnace at the

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ranch. But they stayed too long on the job. Had some sort of a row between themselves, I fancy. One of 'em fired a shot that gave 'em away and another answered it. Sounded like rifle and revolver. Brought us up on the jump."

He talked abstractedly as if to himself, tugging at the long ends of his mustache. Jimmy hid his relief. He had been afraid that the sheriff might look too closely into the firing the posse must have overheard.

"The girl may have got clear with Stimpson and the others," he continued, musingly.

Then his eyes narrowed and flashed while his beaklike nose seemed to project itself from his face as he snapped out—

"Amber didn't tell me you was married!"

If he had not seen the glove Jimmy might have winced at the sudden thrust.

"Didn't he?" he answered nonchalantly. "That's funny."

"Where is she?"

The sheriff's friendliness had slipped from him like a cloak.

"Up-stairs, I suppose. Cleaning up."

"I'd like to see her."

Jimmy could do nothing but produce Deborah. If she had stayed on the landing she could have heard everything. Undoubtedly she had. On that he staked the throw.

"I'll call her," he said and walked to the door, conscious of the sheriff's eyes following his slightest action.

"Deborah!"

"I'm coming," she answered.

JIMMY stared at her in amazement as she came lightly down the stairs. The travel-stained, weary girl had been metamorphosed into a trim housewife. She had contrived an apron, her sleeves were rolled above her shapely elbows and her eyes were alight with excitement.

She stood in the doorway, the picture of a somewhat shy ranch mistress, a little puzzled at the visit, a little perturbed at the condition of her house. The sheriff looked at her admiringly but keenly. The fingers of her left hand were outside the jamb of the door. Jimmy's spirit sank. He knew those fingers were ringless and the sheriff was unostentatiously yet visibly waiting for their appearance. He forestalled Jimmy's introduction.

"Just a minute," he said. "Are you Mrs. Hollister, ma'am?"

It seemed minutes to Jimmy before she spoke.

Her look of surprise was perfect.

"Were you trying to disown me, Jimmy?" she asked.

"Not me, honey, I'm too proud of you."

She dimpled. The sheriff looked from one to the other. His face shadowed with perplexity. Tezah stood stolid by the stove. Deborah's hand came down from the door. Jimmy could not keep his eyes from it. She fussed at her hair with it and his eyes bulged. There was a hoop of gold on the wedding finger. He turned to the officer to make an introduction.

"This is Sheriff——"

"Trainer. At your service, ma'am."

He took the hand that the girl extended.

"I'll be goin' now," he said. "Just dropped in for a chat with your husband."

He went to the door and whirled suddenly. The look on the faces of the psuedo Mr. and Mrs. Hollister brought tension to his brows.

"Bring in those two," he ordered through the doorway.

Jimmy looked through the window. The Shepherd and his son Ben, handcuffed were getting stiffly off of their horses. They had been brought up here to face him. The sheriff was suspicious of the young goatman despite the recommendation of Amber's friendship. Deborah's presence had complicated matters.

A deputy sheriff, rifle in hand, herded the two prisoners into the house. A second stood guard by the horses. As they passed the window Ben Dane's face turned toward him and to Jimmy's amazement, one eye deliberately winked at him in a friendly signal.

"Now then," said the sheriff crisply. "Do you know these men, Mrs. Hollister?"

He stood watching her, an umpire of the law. For a second Deborah seemed to falter as she looked at the Shepherd. The false philanthropy of Dane's face had departed. He appeared what he was, an evil old man with shifting eyes in which craft had given place to a crestfallen cowardice tinged with malice.

"Why—they belong across the cañon, don't they?" she said.

"Since you make it a question, ma'am," said Trainer, "they did, but now they belong to Cañon City."

The deputy chuckled at the grim joke in

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the mention of the penitentiary city. His superior turned sharply on the prisoners.

"Ever see this lady before?" he asked them. "Speak up."

The Shepherd's beard waggled as he started to answer. Jimmy's nails sank deep into his palms. Then he saw Ben Dane kick his father deliberately and cruelly on the ankle. The Shepherd changed his involuntary groan into a cough.

"Not to speak to," said the younger Dane. "I reckon she's the goatman's wife. See here, Sheriff, what's the idea of dragging us all over the country like a couple of bears on a string. This ain't a circus. I ain't squealing. I know when I'm up against it and I'll take my medicine—" he spoke the words straight at Jimmy—"but I ain't no exhibition freak. The goatman don't know anything about us. We told him long ago to keep off the ranch for reasons you can guess.

"His wife never saw my sister, if that's what you're aiming at. And my sister's too slick for you to catch. She made her getaway hours ago with Stimpson and the rest of 'em. We stayed behind to get rid of the outfit. Trouble was we stayed too long. We got into an argument. And you settled it. You've got the goods on us and, if you'll take us down cañon, I'll show you where we buried it. Then quit playing barker to this side-show and take us in. I want to get rid of these bracelets."

He was back of the sheriff, between him and the deputy and he grinned at Jimmy and Deborah, a grin destitute of malice, the outward and visible sign of his inherent chivalry that forced its way through the prime crust of his spirit now that, for him, the game was over and lost.

And Jimmy had won. Trainer's face cleared.

"That's all I wanted to know," he said. "We'll go, and get that outfit. Sorry to have disturbed you, ma'am. Come on."

Jimmy drew Deborah's arm within his and they stood on the veranda as the quintet rode away.

"I always had a sneaking liking for Ben Dane," he said. "He killed Stimpson but it was a fair fight and he shot after Stimpson started it. We'll not meddle in that. As for you, Deborah, you were wonderful."

She withdrew her arm and spoke gravely:

"I heard everything you two said. I did what I could."

She stood a little apart from him, twisting the ring about her finger.

"It was that ring that really convinced Trainer," said Jimmy. "Where did you get it?"

"It was my mother's, the only thing I ever had of hers. I have always worn it 'round my neck."

She took it off and passed it to him. On the inside was engraved:—

Forever 1892.

He took her hand and tried to replace the circlet.

"Let it stay where it is, Deborah," he pleaded. "Until it really means what it stood for just now."

She shook her head at him, all the light gone out of her face, very pale now despite its golden tan. Very small and frail she looked, thought Jimmy, as she brought up a thin gold chain from her neck and snapped on the ring. His own eyes grew firmly tender and the bone in his jaw showed tight against the lean flesh of his chin.

"I am not at all sure that you have the right to do that," he said.

Deborah gasped, backing against the wall of the house.

"What do you mean?"

"You have acknowledged yourself as my wife, before witnesses. In some States, particularly in the West, that is considered binding. If it is, I'll hold you to it."

Her face grew rosy red at his mastery. Her soul crept up to her eyes and looked at him, wistful, admiring and adorably shy. Then she turned and fled into the house.

CHAPTER XIX

YOU SABE?

LATE that afternoon Hollister and Deborah arrived in Floravista on Solo and Tezah's pony. Jimmy had feared the risk of some one in Aztec recognizing Deborah as connected with the Curly O. The northbound train was due in two hours. He purchased tickets for the junction point to Denver and made arrangements to send the horses back to Tezah with a man he hired to stay with the chief as an assistant until they returned to superintend the development of the Aco mine.

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Then he found the doctor's office of the little farming community, feed him and obtained his promise to go to the ranch and attend to Tezah's wound. There was little danger but he did not feel inclined to stint his gratitude.

"We'll get something to eat," he said, as they walked down the street.

Farmers' rigs and motors lined it and there was an air of prosperous bustle about the place, but no undue excitement. The news of the arrest had not reached Floravista. Deborah walked demurely by his side, acquiescing in all he suggested, or rather, ordered with an air of proprietorship that appeared to work its desired effect upon the girl.

Next to the restaurant was a Chinese laundry. Jimmy looked casually through the window. He stopped short, catching at Deborah's arm.

"Come in here a minute," he said.

Wonderingly, she followed him. A Chinaman turned from an ironing-board, his onyx eyes gleaming. It was Ah Fung.

"How do, Misteh Hollistey, how do, missy?" he said. "You come along me in back. One man he likee see you. Evelly thing all light. Betteh we talk lillie while. Evellything all light, you *sabe*," he reiterated as Jimmy hesitated.

The rest of the laundrymen looked at them unconcernedly as Ah Fung opened the door in the rear of the store. A smell of cooking gushed out. The homely odor of onions seemed strangely reassuring. More so was a window that faced the door and looked on to the back of a livery barn. A man was washing a buggy. Jimmy had his automatic with him. An alarm could be easily heard. Ah Fung's manner held promise of worth-while news.

"We've plenty of time, Deborah, let's go in," he said.

There was a stove in the room with pots upon it and a table by the window. Two walls were lined with bunks. In one of them lay a man whose face seemed the paler for an unshaven beard. It was Jerry, the man that Hollister had wounded and, later, succored. His eyes opened with recognition that turned to eager inquiry. Ah Fung shut the door to the laundry.

"He get well pletty soon," he said. "China doctah he fix him plenty good. Mebbe you tell us some news. Bimeby we talk."

"I can't stay long," warned Jimmy.

He briefly told them of the arrest of the Shepherd and Ben Dane and the shooting of the third man. He said nothing of the siege in the cañon, leaving that to be inferred, nor did he mention the mine. Jerry listened avidly and Ah Fung's head nodded like that of a porcelain idol.

"All light," he said. "They no catch us. I got plenty fliend here. Bimeby we go San Flancisco. Suppose any time some one speak I no *sabe*. I just cook for Stimpson. He dead. No can talk. Jelly, he no talk. You *sabe?*"

"I *sabe*," said Jimmy. "We are going away too. How did you get away?"

"In the automobile," said Jerry. "I've got no grudge against you, Hollister. You did more for me than the Shepherd. I reckon you fixed me up so I wouldn't freeze. I thought so," he went on after Jimmy's affirmative nod. "The Danes have got theirs. I'm coming out at the big end, thanks to the Chink. No use talking too much about anything. I'm going to travel on the square when I get out to California. Stimpson's in his grave and if you're agreeable we'll bury the whole thing with him."

"That goes," said Jimmy. "Need any money?"

The sick man's eyes glowed gratefully.

"Can you spare it? It would help."

Jimmy peeled off fifty dollars from his roll, the proceeds from the sale of his kids.

"I can spare that much. You're welcome. We've found out that Miss Deborah is not Dane's daughter," he said with a sudden inspiration, "do you know anything about it?"

Deborah gave a little cry and clasped her hands. Jimmy swiftly realized that the news if there was any might not be welcome. But if that mystery could be cleared, it should be, he decided.

"Why I've always calculated that none of my business," said Jerry slowly. "I've known it for quite a while but as long as Dane wanted folks to think she was his daughter I didn't feel called on to interfere. I could see things was going to explain 'emselves sooner or later when Ben started to get sweet on her—beggin' your pardon, miss.

"Your father—" he addressed himself to the eager, trembling girl—"wasn't any of our gang. He was a pardner of Dane's twenty-five years ago. It was a mining

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deal. A good one. I guess it was the only straight thing the Shepherd ever got mixed up in.

"Your dad was a mining engineer and he'd figured out a way to handle the ore that the rest of 'em had given up. I ain't sure about details. Ben told me one night ten years ago when we was off together on a time in Chicago. He was drunk or he wouldn't have talked.

"Anyhow your dad was killed in the mine. Shafting timbers gave way. Your mother died soon after she got the news. Seems like she was sickly from your bein' born, miss. The mine proposition petered out with no one to handle it right. If it had turned out O. K. mebbe the Shepherd would have gone straight. He adopted you and sent you to school as he promised your dad when he was dyin'.

"I wouldn't over-credit him with that. He was a gambler and he played you for mascot. If he'd gone back on his word to a dyin' man his luck would leave him. He's a bad one. Ben's different. He's rough but he ain't a bad sort. I reckon he figured Ah Fung would look out for me.

"I've always had a hunch from what Ben said that the Shepherd was sweet on your mother, miss. Anyways, Ben said he'd never talk about her."

"What was my father's name?" asked Deborah, her face radiant.

Jimmy looked at her blankly.

"Lord, miss, it's plumb gone out of my head."

"Oh! Think! Please try to think."

He stared at her, his eyes puzzled.

"I'm tryin' to, miss, tryin' my best. It begun with H, seems to me. It had something to do with mines—something to do with the mine turning out right. They was goin' to call it after him. The Last Hope? No, that ain't it. Somethin' like it though. Meant about the same thing."

"Was it Hazard?" suggested Jimmy.

"By God, you've hit it. Hazard! That's it." He raised himself on his elbows in his excitement. "Julian Hazard. I'll tell you, miss. We've got it sure to kingdom. He got his M. E. from the Boulder School of Mines. Like enough you can trace him up from there. Julian Hazard!"

Deborah bent over him with a beaming face.

"You don't know what that means to me, Jerry," she said.

"Or to me, Jerry," repeated Jimmy, catching Deborah's hand.

Ah Fung stood in the background like a beneficent Buddha.

"Pletty good you see me. Pletty good you come in."

Deborah whispered to Jimmy.

"Look here, Jerry," he said. "This news is worth a lot to us. I am going to be able to well afford it and, if you want to go straight, you send me your address in California—write to me at Aztec and I'll get it—and I'll stake you to a good start. Enough to get some land and stock you up as a rancher. What do you say to it? And I'll not forget your share in it, Ah Fung, if you'll let me know where I can find you."

"I think you one —— good chap," said Ah Fung after Jerry had stammered his thanks and protestation of reform. "You take this, missy. Velly good luck!"

He turned and knelt in front of a quaint chest lacquered in red and bound in brass, unlocking it with a key on a string concealed by his blouse. He took out a bracelet of carven gray stone and another smaller object.

"This leal jade," he said presenting the hoop to Deborah. "Look pletty on alm. Bimeby plenty good for lillee baby to make teeth glow. This good luck, too."

He handed Jimmy a disc of gold on which a Chinese ideograph was raised.

"This you all same keep in pocket," he said. "Mebbe put on watch chain. This mean good luck, plenty health, plenty happy, plenty money. All same mascot. Suppose you play pokeh all same you win—evelly time. This leal gold," he ended with a grin. "Not like money they make in cañon!"

As they reached the street Jimmy found Deborah's hand still in his. He released it with a blush.

"That breaks down your last argument, Deborah," he said. "We'll trace your father from the School of Mines. The books will show his home town. We can go there and look up your folks. We'll do it on our honeymoon."

"But——"

"That word is taboo from now on. We'll argue it out on the way to Denver. Meantime, romancers to the contrary, I'm starving. We've just time to get a bite to eat before the train leaves."

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CHAPTER XX

CAPRICORN LIMITED

THEY had an anxious minute or so while the train stopped at Aztec but there was no sign of the sheriff or his prisoners. As the engine gathered speed they sat side by side in the day coach gazing at the up slope of the plateau split by Turquoise Cañon. The sunset sky had faded to the green of the turquoise matrix in Jimmy's pocket. Against it, silhouetted in purple-black, they caught a glimpse of Diablo. Deborah's hand was already snuggled in his between them on the seat, decorously hidden from the sight of the passengers who all seemed to sense the aura of their happiness. He pressed it and his blood raced until it tingled in his veins at the response.

Night fell and a moon rose and tossed splinters of itself into the racing torrent of the Rio Las Animas. It was ten o'clock when they reached Durango where the branch came in from Pagosa Junction. This was the destination of their accommodation train and Jimmy, at first with dismay, then with glowing joy, discovered that there was no train to Denver until the next morning. He returned to Deborah with a look in his face that made her clutch the iron arms of the waiting-room seat.

"What is it?" she asked.

"The last train's gone and you and I are going to find a minister. We've got the ring."

"But——"

"Word forbidden. Argument ruled out. Come on."

He swept her along, breathless, up the slope of the road that led to the lights of the town. Suddenly she stopped.

"Jimmy Hollister, I won't. I haven't any clothes. I won't be married in these. I can't."

"Neither have I. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Hang the trousseau! This is a question of propriety, Deborah!"

The station buses had passed them. The road was deserted. The moon had dropped behind the range and the light of the stars was discreetly dimmed. He took her in his arms and kissed her upturned, expostulating face.

"But Jimmy," she said. "I must use 'but.' It's a woman's privilege. You are a darling—there's some one coming—but you are stupid. You don't understand. I simply won't marry you until I've gone shopping!"

They turned the shoulder of the mounting road and the main street of Durango lay before them in a comparative blaze of lights.

"Glory be," cried Jimmy. "I'm an ass. Durango is a twenty-four-hour town. The stores keep open for the day shifts. Go on and do your shopping. Here's the Silver City Emporium. I'm to wait outside, I suppose?"

"Certainly, sir. You may smoke a cigar, if you like."

"Cigar. I had forgotten there were such things. Hurry up! Here's something you'll need."

He put the roll of bills in her hand and watched her as she entered, light and buoyant. The cigar passed from his mind as he paced impatiently up and down, multiplying the minutes into hours by the inverse ratios of love.

"JIMMY!"

He turned from the window. Amber stood before him by the side of an erect figure at the sight of which Jimmy leaped forward.

"Dad! The last person in the world I thought to see—and the best. What brings you here?"

Father and son wrung hands while the goatman tugged at his goatee.

"The business that brought me West fizzled out, Jimmy," said his father. "I wired Amber from Denver to Pagosa. No answer, so I telephoned. They told me he was at Durango at a convention. Down I came, pulled him out of a caucus and persuaded him to take me down to your place. No train till tomorrow though."

"Didn't need persuadin'," said Amber. "I was goin' anyway. Sort of uneasy, way things was headin' when I left. What are we standin' outside here for. Let's go to the hotel and celebrate while we talk it over."

"Can't be done," said Jimmy. "I'm waiting for my wife."

"Your wife?"

The clear-cut face of Hollister, Sr., lengthened in bewilderment.

"Your what?"

"Wife! Or will be as soon as we can find

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a minister. You're just in time to give her away."

Amber slapped him on the back.

"Jumping rattlesnakes!" he cried. "It's Dane's girl."

"No," said Jimmy.

Amber's countenance relapsed into a ludicrous blank.

"No?" he repeated.

"Her name's Hazard. Deborah Hazard. She wasn't Dane's daughter at all. I'll tell you all about it later, dad. This is my busy evening. Here she is. You are going to love her to death. If I didn't marry her tonight I'd be jealous of you tomorrow."

Deborah had bought a traveling suit of blue serge, which by the miracle of a "perfect thirty-six" fitted her to perfection. Her hat was a turban beneath which her hair gleamed like red gold. A clerk followed her with bundles. She hesitated at the sight of Jimmy's companions.

"It's all right, Deborah. It's my father."

Hollister, Sr.'s face was a trifle grim and a little cynical as the girl timidly advanced. He spoke in kindly fashion.

"My boy tells me you are going to make him happy."

Deborah looked up and smiled and Jimmy, from his own experience, knew that the elder generation of the Hollister household had capitulated.

IN THE drawing-room of the Denver Limited the next day Jimmy had a confidential conference with his father.

"I hate to inject bad news into your honeymoon, my boy," he said. "I had hoped to have been able to treat you generously when you married but things have gone awry with me of late. These war times have upset the usual order of things. I would not touch the munitions end of it and my neutrality has proved expensive. I may have to come and live with you and Deborah on that ranch of yours. Is there much money in goats?" he asked whimsically. "It may not be as bad as all that," he added. "If I knew where I could get hold of some more capital I might——"

"Capital?" interrupted Jimmy. "Why I can provide that. I haven't told you anything about Tezah and the mine in Turquoise Cañon. Goats are only a by-product. Deborah and I are rich. Wait——"

He went out to the observation car where Mrs. Hollister, Jr., was chatting with Amber until her liege lord finished his talk with his father. He took them both back with him to the drawing-room, opened his grip and produced the specimens of turquoise matrix and free gold.

"Now then," he said. "We'll form the company. Amber, you're in on this on the ground floor."

"What are you going to call it?" asked Amber.

"Capricorn Incorporated."

Presently, when Amber and Hollister, Sr., had discreetly retired, Deborah asked the question that had been trembling on her lips all morning.

"Your father—does he like me, Jimmy?"

"He told me that my choice of you had convinced him of two things. That I had inherited his own tastes and that my wisdom teeth must be entirely developed."

"And you, Jimmy?"

"You see that pine forest, Deborah, covering the ridge. If every seed in every cone should grow into a tree and all that forest was made into timber, it would not furnish planks enough to make one side of a chest large enough to contain a tithe of the love I hold for you."

It was a fantastic metaphor even for the morning after marriage but to Deborah, as she snuggled in his arms with a sigh of utter content, it was eminently satisfactory.

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Mr. HARRINGTON'S WIFE

by W. TOWNEND

Author of "Lieutenant Tony Mallagh," "A Gentleman Ranker," etc.

EDITORS' NOTE—This story was written nearly five years ago. Mr. Townend sent it to us in July, 1912, when he was living in California. Just why it has lain so long in our safe is difficult to explain.

Until the war called him home to fight for his native country, England, Mr. Townend, our older readers will remember, was one of our regular contributors and his stories were among the most popular we have ever printed. *Mr. Harrington* was a prime favorite; he stood out from the stories a living, breathing man, likable, a bit pathetic, above all human. Generally the tales he told us were chiefly about others, very little about himself. Yet when at last he did tell us something about his own life we kept it in the safe for five years. Partly, at least, it was because we considered the story as strong as it is unusual and were blindly treasuring it as a miser blindly treasures his gold.

You will find the mystery as baffling as did *Mr. Harrington* himself. Perhaps the solution will never be known. But it is too real a transcript from life, too crowded with human emotions and the strange twists of the human mind that make real life a greater puzzle than any fiction, not to appeal to any one who finds life itself worth thinking about.

Next month in "Camp-Fire" there will be a letter from Mr. Townend telling just why he left the mystery unsolved. But it does not solve the mystery itself. And perhaps it is better so.

Mr. Townend is still "over there," fighting against the Hun. Now and then he has written asking why we did not publish the story. And we could never tell him. So he, too, has a mystery to solve and is repaid in his own coin. And perhaps the greatest mystery of all is how he will feel when, with the world and his own life turned topsy-turvy by the great war, he finally sees in print the story written five years before in that past life which he says has come to seem to him like another existence. And where will he be when he reads it? In France again? In Egypt? Italy? Mesopotamia? The Balkans? England?

A DARK night with a cold breeze blowing across the swamps from Russia, yet Mr. Harrington and I leaned over the port rail amidships, watching the lights of Sulina three miles away, and listening to the lapping of the water against the hull.

"Shall we go below?" I said after a time.

There was no answer, and then from a St. Ives boat moored near the *Umballa* came the melancholy strains of "Rio" played on an old accordion.

Mr. Harrington crumbled a pipeful of tobacco between his palms and began to sing softly.

Now, where are you going, my pretty young maid?
Heave away, for Rio!
Oh! where are you going, my pretty young maiden?'
For we're bound for Rio Grande!
Heave away for Rio!
Heave away for Rio!
Singing fare ye well, my pretty young maiden,
We're bound for Rio Grande!

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Which is one of the songs of the sea that may never be forgotten.

Mr. Harrington stuffed the tobacco in the bowl of his pipe, ramming it down with his knife.

"I am going a milking, kind sir," she said,
Heave away for Rio!

"—— it!" he growled. "Fancy starting that old thing! I'm not a sailor off a windjammer. I hate it more than any other tune I ever heard. What's more, I've never been near Rio in my life."

The music ended suddenly, but Mr. Harrington continued to talk in a low voice —to himself, it seemed, rather than to me.

"Yes, it's all good-by, an' never coming back no more, an' best forget all about him; fire bars and canvas and the engines stopped and a better man to take his place. Err-gh! Makes me shiver, it does. I wonder who wrote it.

"I have done those things which I ought not to have done, as the prayer-book hath it, an' never felt any the worse for so doing, save and excepting that I'm not as young as I once was. But sometimes I think that if I'd steered more carefully and had had better charts, I'd ha' weathered the gale. It's the song that makes me remember.

"Of course, if I'd ha' stuck at home that time, an' settled down with Aunt Maria an' the cockatoo, as the old man wanted me, I'd ha' been a respectable, God-fearing, church-every-Sunday-in-a-top-hat member of society by now, instead of a second engineer on a tramp steamer with no hope of ever getting any higher. I was chief once for three voyages, all the same. A dog's life, a hog's job."

Mr. Harrington touched me on the elbow and I turned quickly.

"Well?"

"I've told you a lot of things about myself, one way and another, since we left Methil, haven't I?"

"Yes," I said, puzzled by the question and the manner in which he spoke.

"An' you think you know me then, eh?" said Mr. Harrington. "You think you know all about me, eh? Ticketed me, marked down my price, shop-soiled, the same as most fellows do, eh?"

I said nothing, but wound my muffler around my neck and shivered.

"You don't understand," he continued, "though you pretend you do. You'll learn some day, I expect, when you're older—we all do; but if you want to sleep easy o' nights I hope you never will."

"What are you driving at, Mr. Harrington?" I said, wondering what was coming next.

"It's easy enough not to believe sometimes; it's easy enough to laugh an' say: 'The—— liar!' But—there's a lot you don't know about me, what you never would know if you sailed with me a thousand years, unless— You wouldn't believe, now, if I said I was married, would you?

"I was, all the same. Yes, I was married once. Me! An' what it all meant, God only knows! Listen then. If you will, you will.

"The whole thing was lopsided, a fairy-tale. I met her casual in—of all places under the dipper—Cardiff. Saw her the first day I reached port. We'd discharged timber after a Western ocean voyage an' come 'round from Maryport. Dry Dock. I was second on the *Maid of Orleans* at that time. Oh, yes, it was after the *Arabella*. As good a little hooker as ever I was in, the *Maid* was.

"Soon after tea, I went ashore with the third, Sammy Hutton. An innocent-looking babe, with a tongue on him like a Liverpool bucko's, an' drank whisky as it might have been milk. And I matched him. We visited a number of houses, lapping it up, rejoicing just to sniff the streets again, baking in the sun.

"'Let's try old George's place,' says Sam, and off we goes.

"I never got to George's. I slipped off quiet by myself, without saying a word. Just because a girl passed me and I couldn't catch no more than a glimpse of her face.

"I WANTED to look at it again, to see every bit of it; I had to. She was walking with a man—he talking, she not. I remember now how he looked. As miserable as ever I seen, tired and angry and pale. He was dressed in clothes no different to other people's, yet somehow not a bit the same. Better fitting—I dunno; I can't say exactly. It was the girl that bothered me.

"It was the way she held herself that first made me switch on to her. She was dressed in plain white, with a big brown straw hat, and broad ribbons tied under her chin.

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Copper-brown hair, masses; blue eyes as steady an' clear as a Summer's sky; a mouth like a young rose, looked as if it wanted to smile the whole time; a skin like pink seashells, not much color; with a trick of lifting her head quickly an' looking at you kind of scornful. My soul! Ay-ah! Never can I forget that look, night or day.

"I'd often gone running after girls before; yes, white, black, yellow and brown—more shame to me!—but never before, or never since, did I crumple up like I did then. I just wanted to look at her, just that. I knew she was as far beyond me as—as heaven above, but I wanted to look at her.

"They went on and on, till I thought they'd never stop; and I wasn't used to walking, I tell you. But at last she fetches to, and I drifts 'round a corner. I didn't mean to listen, but I heard before I could help myself.

"'I will not,' she says, stamping her foot. 'I never,' says she, 'wish to see you again—never, never!' She spoke soft, yet as bitter as death. 'Leave me,' she says, 'at once.'

"An' the man slopes by me, reeling like he was drunk. I'd seen the shadow of hell on a man's face before, on my own since, but never like that.

"I turned, an' met the girl moving back very slowly, and as I'm alive, crying to herself. I followed her at a distance, just wondering.

"Now, this is gospel! It fell out so. I wished that I could speak to her, without offense. I said to myself I'd barter my soul for just one smile from that girl's lips. Yes, an' perhaps I shall have to pay for it; perhaps I shall. It was dusk and, as I said, I followed her, wondering. A man on the other side of the road—quiet it was, way out—crosses over. I knew at once. I've done so myself, and thought no harm of it.

"'Hullo, dear!' he says. 'May I——'

"She drew back pretty sharp, tilting up her chin. A puffy-faced fool, the man was, soft and flabby, with an evil smile.

"'You're wanting some one to see you home,' says he. 'Haven't we met before?' She gave a little cry and I came up.

"'Mister,' I says, gripping him by the elbow, 'if you'll allow me——'

"'Who the devil are you?' says he.

"'That's none of your business,' I says, 'but if you don't clear, Heaven help you!'

"He spoke vicious. No man likes to be made a fool of before a girl. He wriggled. I never moved, and he saw it was no good. He was a baby to me.

"'Now,' says I, 'you shove off; an' next time you see a lady, try an' remember how to behave; or,' I says, 'you'll need to get that face of yours doctored.'

"I let him go then, an' he took to his heels an' fair ran for it.

"The girl had hurried on and left me. There's girls an' girls; there's girls you don't want to speak to, an' can; there's girls you want to, an' can *not*. Most generally, it's, 'Give's a kiss!' and there you are.

"Well, I stood where I was without moving, when all of a sudden she turns 'round an' beckons. She looked at me very thoughtful when I came up.

"'Thank you,' she says. An' her voice was like a brook running gently over the stones. I didn't speak, an' she says slowly:

"'Will you see me home, please?' says she. 'I'm not quite certain where I am.'

"I have known every kind of wickedness almost in the world, since; but through all I take it to my credit that she asked me that. She trusted me. And I walked with her through the streets of Cardiff, as if I was floating on air, just glancing at her, without giving a thought to anything else. She only says one thing all the way home.

"'You're not married?' says she.

"'Why, no,' says I.

"That was all. But, thinks I, what had she asked me that for? And I put it that she'd have been easier if I'd been an old gray-haired shellback with a dozen kids.

"For the first time in my life I felt ashamed of what I was. Yes, and I saw then what my folk at home—Aunt Maria, Fanny, Amelia, an' such like—must have thought of me. We struck a quiet sort of road—getting dark it was, by now—and stopped in front of a gate.

"'This,' she says, 'is where I am living, though I do not call it home. Thank you for your kindness.' I just raises my hat and backs off.

"'Aren't you, 'says she, 'aren't you going to shake hands?'

"Then an old chap comes down the path, an' sticks his head over the fence.

"'Why,' says he, 'why, what—I never knew,' he says, 'that you was out!'

"Like that, all bewildered, an' silly kind of.

"'This gentleman,' says she, 'saw me back safely.'

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"He looks at me, peering through his specs.

"'Good Heavens!' he says. 'You're never that——'

"'No,' says the girl, speaking very scornful. 'No, he is not.'

"'Who the devil are you, then?' says the old chap, very loud and angry.

"'Sir,' says I, 'my name is Harrington—Thomas Harrington.' And I told him I was an officer on the *Maid*.

"'My father,' says the girl, 'was captain of a sailing-ship an' was drowned at sea.'

"But before she could say another word, the old fool bellows out for her to come in at once; which she does, very red, without looking at me again. I heard him blackguarding her.

"Now I didn't worry overmuch about all what had happened, but my heart was like a racing crank when I thought of her. What the old chap had meant when he spoke to me; who he was; who the other man was—I'd no notion. I never tried to fit things together. Just that girl, she what she was, an' me a poor oil-slinging engineer, who'd done his best to break every one of the ten commandments and a few others thrown in. I felt just like the chanty they was playing a while back."

And Mr. Harrington sang the third verse, drumming with his fingers on the rail.

Now, may I come with you, my pretty young maid?
Heave away for Rio!
Oh! may I come with you, my pretty young maiden?
And we're bound for Rio Grande!

"Yes, from that moment life wasn't life at all. Says Sammy Hutton:

"'Where'd you get to?'

"'I dunno,' says I.

"'You wicked old sinner!' says he. 'What's her name?'

"'Sam,' says I, 'we've been good pals; but if you want a fight, say so, an' we'll go on deck.'

"I stopped on board to look after the ship, so to speak, not caring to make arrangements for going home; and everybody else hooked it. I walked hundreds of miles— it seemed like it—just praying to get another glimpse of that girl's face. I couldn't eat, I couldn't drink, I couldn't sleep. When I wasn't tramping about Cardiff, I was in my berth, with my eyes shut trying to remember what she looked like, how she spoke.

"An' then—now comes the most extraordinary part of the whole affair. I do not know what it meant or how it come about, or anything. I only took it as being so: a miracle. It's true, as I live, all I'm telling you; and yet impossible. And if you do not believe it, I only know I shouldn't, if I heard it same as you."

Again Mr. Harrington stopped; and I waited patiently, my teeth chattering with the cold, my feet half frozen. Yet not for worlds would I have spoken then.

"I MET her again one evening. An' what's more, she was hunting for me. That's true! For me.

"'Mr. Harrington,' she says trembling, 'I want to speak to you. You did me a greater service the other day than you thought,' says she. I walked by her side, slow, keeping step.

"'I'm in trouble,' says she. 'What it is, I may not tell you, but things have happened,' she says, 'that ha' frightened me.'

"I can not tell you how she looked. Tender an' wistful an' red as a rose. If she had took any notice of me, she must ha' seen how I was. I just worshiped her as I had done from the first moment I saw her.

"'If,' says I, 'I can do anything for you, I'll do it.' I caught a reflection of ourselves in a big glass in a furniture shop. She, walking like a princess, straight, clean and beautiful. Me, slouching along, my face engine-room color, ugly an' showing what kind of offal I was. I remember, all the same, thanking my stars that I'd got rid of the bristles I generally wore an' looked a shade less like a condemned prisoner than usual. I was wondering if she wanted me to fight any one or what it was, when she spoke in a voice so soft I could hardly catch her meaning.

"'Mr. Harrington,' she says, 'will you marry me?'

"Well, as you might so put it, my eccentric straps got heated an' broke sudden. I was blind drunk, I must be or perhaps I hadn't understood.

"'Beg your pardon!' I says. 'I didn't quite hear——'

"'I want,' she says, blushing and then turning white, 'I want you to marry me. If—if you have no other girl in view. There is nothing,' says she, 'wrong. Nothing——'

"I stood staring like a stuck pig, waiting for the rain of diamonds an' pearls an' rubies.

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"'What?' says I. 'You want what?'

"'Mr. Harrington, for the third time—will you not spare me the shame of asking again?—will you be my husband?'

"'God help you!' I says. 'I will.'

"And I didn't even know her name. I never worry my head about that business now. I gave it up, long back. But whatever it was, *this* was certain; she wanted to be my wife! My wife!

"'I can not tell you,' she says, 'why. But a girl, a woman,' says she, 'can see what a man can not. For that reason,' she says, 'I was not afraid to ask you to marry me. I—I am not,' says she, 'bad-looking. I am speaking the truth when I say that no man need be ashamed to have me as a wife.'

"Yes, a slip of a girl, standing there with her hands behind her back, and one small foot tapping the ground, asking me to marry her!

"'My name is Norah,' she says. 'An' yours is Tom, as I know. You *will* marry me, then?'

"'God help you!' I says. 'Yes.'

"'Call me Norah,' says she. 'And say it over again.'

"'Norah,' I says, 'I'll marry you. But,' says I, once more, 'God help you, for you little know what I am. An',' says I, 'why you have chosen me, I can not guess. For,' I says, 'I am only a poor hard-up tramp steamer engineer, an' you——'

"'I,' says she, tilting her chin, 'I am the daughter of a sailor. I know what the sea means. And as for poor,' she says, 'I have money of my own, at least; and——'

"'That,' I says, 'is nothing; but——'

"'You may kiss me, Tom,' she says. An' she put her lips up to mine. I had kissed, an' been kissed, times without number, all as part of the game; but that girl's kiss made me choke. Her lips were like cool velvet, an' I felt weak an' helpless an' a rotten sinner that wasn't fit to kneel before her.

"'Tell me,' I says, almost shaking, I was that bewildered. 'Tell me what it all means. Think of me, an' you! Who,' says I, 'is the old gentleman I saw the other day? Why——'

"'Tom,' she says, 'don't ask. It is not my secret; there are other people——'

"And she stops again.

"'We'll be married as soon as possible,' she says.

"'But,' says I, remembering all of a sudden, 'we put out to sea in a fortnight; and ——'

"'I know,' she says, 'and I'll arrange. You must not stop on shore, just because of that. Remember I am a sailor's daughter and I know.'

"You see, I'd sworn faithful I'd go with the *Maid* next trip. I was thinking how I could get out of it, having promised.

"Anyhow, one fine morning, a few days later, she and I was married by license, which I'd got explaining that I was off to sea shortly, which was true. There was only Sammy Hutton there, and an elderly old woman, who cried the whole time. Her nurse, Norah told me. It was the queerest turnout I ever struck. Ay-ah! My marriage!

"And after we was man and wife, the old nurse just hugged her an' cried worse than ever.

"'It's usual,' says Sammy to me. 'They always do it. I expect,' he says in a whisper, 'it's hardly legal without.'

"'An' now,' says Norah, 'you've got to come back with me, Tom. Just to explain.'

"An' back she and I goes in a cab, leaving Sammy staring at the nurse, with his jaw propped up by his chest.

"We drove to the place where I'd seen her that first evening, an' found hell loose. The front door was open, and in we went. The old chap comes shuffling down the hall, gibbering crazy.

"'Where have you been?' says he. 'You never told us that——'

"He sees me an' stops. A tall woman followed, very stern an' dressed in black silk.

"'Where have you been to?' she says. 'Answer me at once. An',' she says, 'who is this person?'

"Lord! I didn't know what it was all about. It only added to the general mess-up.

"'That is my husband,' says Norah, looking at the two of them, quite steady and very scornful. The tall lady kind of chokes, and then—give you my word—faints, slap away dead. An' the old chap goes white an' tottery, an' says—'How could you?'

"She laughs at him, very bitter.

"'Oh! you good, kind, respectable people,' she says, 'you care a lot, don't you!' An' to me—

"'Tom, let's go!'

"After twelve days—shall I ever forget those days?—the *Maid of Orleans* put out

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to sea. I left my girl in the place we'd stopped at, with the old woman. Yes, the *Maid* cast off her moorings and was away once more for a short voyage, I hoped—for a short voyage.

"'Good-by, Tom,' she says. 'You'll think of me now and again. Good-by, my dear.'

"And I slunk off, like a puppy tied to a tin can. And I loved her. My——! But I loved her.

"Well, I kept as straight as ever mortal man could; always thinking of the girl at home, always thinking, night and day, asleep and awake, on watch and off. And I tell you—that voyage! Never was there one like it. I'd have given pounds if there'd been a bit of a smash on board; anything to make me forget, only for a minute or two.

"D'you know, it wasn't till we were coasting down toward the Straits that I tried to puzzle out what had happened. There was I, a married man, married to a girl as much above me as heaven to hell. And she'd asked me to marry her. Now I ask you, why was it so? Why? What was the cause of it all? Why? An' twelve days of it; twelve, an' then—

"'Good-by; you'll think of me, now and again.'

"HOWEVER, it's all done with now. That self an' same *Maid of Orleans* went to sea, and I was the most miserable man in the world. All I could do was to pray that we'd have a short trip. An' praying's a thing I'm not in the habit of doing. It's not the likes of me that has any chance; what with the millions of parsons, Aunt Marias, an' such like, all clamoring, there must be plenty for them up aloft to see after without bothering about me.

"From the Bristol Channel we let out for Sicily with coal. Where we were bound for after that was not fixed. Black Sea, I hoped and home. No fear! Orders for Huelva, iron ore, and a Western ocean voyage again. Yes, Philadelphia. Oil, I prayed and home. No fear! Just think for a minute, we was chartered by a Yankee firm. Coal for the West Indies, and sugar back; salt fish for the West Indies, sugar back. And I near broke my heart. For how long? As long as they wanted us.

"Yes, an' there were we, Cuba an' such like to New York; then, scuppers awash, rolling down again with coal. I nearly went mad. A long, long time, an' nothing to ease the ache. And it's hard, when you've been used to looking at things through the bottom of a whisky glass. It's perishing hard. An' the rest of 'em——

"The laws of Heaven and of earth do not trouble the likes of us. You're going to be drowned, say, voyage after next. Have your fling. Try an' cheat the devil of his due as long as you can, drink all you can, till you can't see the face of the crimp that's trying to steal your money, paint the town red——

"You're having the time of your life. You're happy. I've done it. I do it. An' then, be ready to die like a gentleman with your boots laced an' the water's in the stokhole an' the deck hands are over the side.

"More than seven months was it before we made for the Bristol Channel again; more than seven months, each a year long; eight cargoes an' seven months and a half, since we'd seen the green of the Welsh coast.

"I'd heard from the girl. Short letters mostly—she said she wasn't much of a hand at letter-writing—but they were from *her*, and I kept them. I have them now—all the letters she ever wrote me; little scraps with big sloping handwriting, regular an' firm.

"In the last letter I got, before we left Norfolk, Virginia, she told me she'd gone to live in the country—a few miles out, but quiet.

"Soon's ever I could work it I rushed off. Saturday night we came in, Sunday morning early I cleared. I found the place right enough, a short way out by rail and near the station; a small house in a big garden.

"She was my wife. Yes, my wife. I said it over and over again, as I folded her in my arms. And yet I wondered at it. My wife of twelve days. She whiter in the face than when I last was home, but the same to me. And now—ay-ah! it's all over!

"I had to be on board the same evening. Wednesday or so, I was back again for another visit. I was going to have a long spell ashore, soon's ever I could, or I'd know the reason why. That, however, would come a bit later. I'd made no arrangements, but I'd have it, if I had to leave the ship altogether.

"The girl wasn't herself. I saw that as soon as I come in. I didn't think there was anything wrong, but I asked her. No, it was nothing, of course not. An' she sat

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in the firelight an' stared at me, wrapped up in a big blanket coat, not saying a word. Bashful, sort of.

"Later on I found her crying. Yes, I did. And when I tried to comfort her, she just laughed an' laughed. I was frightened, not being use to such.

"'I'm not worthy of you,' she says, 'I'm not. You're too good for me.' Again and again. I give you the words as she said them—'not worthy of you.' What do you make of that? What did I? Ay-ah! I was younger then than I am now, as stands to reason.

"'Norah,' says I, 'if you knew, if you could understand, half what I've been, only half——'

"I couldn't go on; just felt sick of myself, an' that innocent slip of a girl, not good enough for a thing like me. I left her an' went into the kitchen.

"'Jane,' I says, 'I don't think your mistress is looking as well as she should.' The old nurse never took to me over much. She knew what I was, and knew that I knew she did.

"'Miss Norah!' she says, staring at me, stirring something in a cup.

"'Yes,' I says; 'I'm going to work things so that I have a long spell on shore. My ship must go without me,' I says.

"'It will do no such thing,' says she. 'Do you not see what is ailing Miss Norah?'

"'A cold, most likely,' says I. 'She's pale an'——' The old woman put down the cup and began to laugh.

"'A cold!' she says. 'The man's a fool,' says she. 'Have you no eyes in your head to see what's written up? Can you not see? An',' says she, 'you will go off with your ship again, till it is all over.'

"An' then I saw what a blind idiot I was. An' I went in an' knelt by her side an' looked up at her face an' kissed her. I couldn't speak.

"But stay at home they said I should not. The woman told me straight out, an' my girl just sat an' looked into the fire, as though she didn't care. A baby! Ay-ah! And I was to be a father. Amusing, isn't it, when you come to think of it?

"The *Maid of Orleans* was dry-docked, scraped an' sent off again in 'bout as short a time as I remember. Cargoes were plentiful—not like now; an' we had a Black Sea charter, which meant about two months and a bit, with luck an' no long lies. Savona with coal, an' then some or other grain port.

"All I was certain about was that my girl—God help me!—wanted to go through her trouble an' pain alone, so's to spare me. Yes, the old nurse told me that. And *I*—God help me!—and I went off to sea, knowing what I was leaving her to. Sorrow an' sickness an' perhaps death. Ay-ah! Sorrow an' sickness an' death.

"A few days after we reached Savona I got the news. The child had been born, an' Norah was quite well, considering. It sort of threw me on my beam ends.

"At Constant', another letter, black-edged. I took it to my berth an' propped it up on the chest of drawers. I dared not open it. I just sat an' looked at the ugly thing, till we'd cleared Kavak an' were well out in the Black Sea.

"I was certain that Norah was dead. I felt it in me. I was sure that that would be the first thing I'd see—Norah dead. I opened it, at last, on my watch. It was the child—a girl—that was dead, and I shouted aloud with joy, I did. And a fireman came to see what was up. Ay-ah! The child; and it might ha' been——

"Another letter at Sulina from the nurse. My wife very well, but bearing up. If we'd been an Atlantic mail-boat we'd ha' been too slow for my wishes. At Algiers, no letter. Bound for Sharpness, we were.

"I couldn't get home the day we got in—too late. The next morning early I was off as if the devil was driving me. That old chief of ours was a decent old sort. Came from Flint way, of all forsaken places, an' swore by the Mersey.

"As I went up toward the house, I walked slow, biting my tongue, just keeping myself back. I had to, else I'd ha' run. No hurry; slow an' steady, with my eyes bulging. There was the agony of the whole voyage jammed into that short walk. An'—well, guess what I saw! Guess what it was I run up against! Guess! You couldn't.

"The house was the same as ever; allowing for the difference between April and January, there was no change in that. There was nobody at the door—no. The something I mean was at the fence. A notice board—

THIS HOUSE TO LET

"Yes, gone! Not the ghost of a breath of my girl. Nothing save the memory. No

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scrap of a trace left. Not a message. I smashed a window an' searched every gory inch of the house. I didn't carry on; no. I'm not one to make a blasted show of myself when the ship's in a bad way. No use, anyhow, and a bad example to the stoke-hole hands. I just sat on the bare floor with my back against the wall and smoked and thought.

"Heigho! An' then I made some inquiries near by. Nobody knew *me*. And I didn't enlighten their ignorance; it wasn't any good. If there was anything wrong—an accident, as I put it—I'd got to keep my mouth shut. If there was nothing the matter, if there was a letter waiting on board it was still less good.

"Was Mrs. Harrington away? I asks at a cottage near. A woman looks at me, wiping her hands on her apron, very surprised that I'd not heard. I told her that I was a stranger.

"'Oh!' she says. 'Well, it's like this. Her husband used her badly, poor thing! An' run away from her.'

"'Ah!' says I. 'Really! I'm sorry for that.' Speaking an' yet not knowin' what I said.

"'Yes,' says she. 'An' Mrs. Harrington's gone to London. Her old nurse told the postman. Yes, she's gone to London to search for her husband. A gentleman—her brother, so we heard,' says she, 'came an' fetched her away. She's only been gone a week or so.'

"I thanked her, an' went off to the house agents. No news there, no address. I went back to the ship. I didn't try an' see where the kid was buried, not feeling any interest that way.

"'Hullo!' says Sam. 'Everybody all right? You're home most amazing early. Expected you tomorrow.'

"'Hi!' says the chief. 'Letters for you.'

"One was from my old dad. We was friends now; he knew I was married an' had wanted me to send the girl along; but knowing the ways of the family, Aunt Maria, Doodles an' Jujube, I wasn't taking any. Another was from Fanny—married some time she was. Another from my wife.

"'Look!' says the chief. 'We'll be laid up a while, so you'll be able to have a longer spell at home,' he says. I thanked him, an' started to read the letters. Norah's last. Postmark, London: very clear an' convincing, being a small neighborhood.

"Now, that letter were the most incomprehensible piece of writing mortal man ever set eyes on. All the trouble in my life has been in letters. A short note, even shorter than most of hers were. At first, she wrote, she had not been able to live without me. Now, she couldn't live with me. Not a word explaining things. Just said she was going to live as a single woman again. Ay-ah! That was the end. Fare thee well, my pretty young maiden, an' good-by!

"I sat on a hatch an' considered a while. I knew that there was some dark mystery. I knew—well, I don't know quite what I did know. Anyhow, she'd done with me, and I—I felt like I'd done with everything.

"I just didn't care what happened to me after that. Nothing mattered. I threw all the good resolutions overboard, and then I had the thickest week of my life. What a week! An' me married! *Me.* I never saw her again.

"Two years afterward, I got a letter. No address. Said she was dying an' wanted to be forgiven. Said she wasn't fit to kneel at my feet, an' that there were things she could not think of. She married me for reasons of her own. She hadn't cared for me one scrap, she said, at first. Afterward, it was different. Yes, she said she loved me better than I could imagine. An' she had left me. Why? Because she was afraid I'd find out what had happened an' hate her. Find out what? I dunno. That was the letter. But never a word as to why, or what it all meant. Ay-ah! It's a dream; just a dream! And I'm alive—an' look at me!

"Now, I don't know, being nothing better than a drunken second engineer on a broken-winded tramp, what it was. Perhaps the kid dying sent her crazy, perhaps—I dunno. But I do know *this*. That when I'm feeding fires below, with clinkers for fuel, and a red-hot slice, and nothing but boiling oil in the black-pan, with the steam-gage flickering, an' the devils shouting 'Ashes!' down the hoist, an' there'll be no eight bells there—then, of all the women in this life that I've known, by——! she'll be the only one to pity me. And I *know* that she'll be doing her level best to give me a drink of cold water."

With a curt "Good night," Mr. Harrington turned and went below, leaving me gazing down into the black flood of the Danube, swirling by toward the open sea.

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HAIR-TRIGGER HOLLIBAUGH

by W. C. TUTTLE

Author of "A Tin Cup Trophy," "The Wisdom of Cyclops," etc.

WHENEVER uh man sets down to review his past life he sure must have uh hardened conscience if he don't shed uh few tears uh sympathy for himself. I sure did. I always figured that my conscience was plated with Harveyized steel, but just the same I weeps copious and fluent like.

I meditates on what uh fool uh man is who has just turned forty, ain't got nothing but two days' grub, uh denatured jackass to pack it with, uh strip uh cleaned bed-rock, fifteen feet below the grass roots, and not uh color to show.

Hard work? Cripes! That fifteen-foot hole was nothing but uh succession of lifts, heaves and grunts. Also, I owned uh rocker. It was built on the spur of the moment and kicked to pieces in uh whole lot less time, when I pans plumb across that strip uh corrugated rock and don't find nothing more exciting than some black sand. I rinses out my gold-pan, meditates for uh minute, and then sails her off into the crick bottom like uh blue-rock.

Just to show that I'm disappointed entirely I waits until she almost stops sailing, and then punctures her with five or six .41 slugs. I grins with Satanic glee at my handiwork, and then orates aloud to nobody:

"There! I'm through! I don't believe there ever was any gold."

"Everybody is entitled to their beliefs," states uh tired-sounding voice behind me, and I turns sudden-like.

I figured that I was the only human being within twenty miles, and after taking uh look at the owner of that voice, leaning against uh granite outcropping, I don't change my opinion.

He'd be uh handy thing to measure telegraph poles with, and yuh could allow the length of his feet for the part of the pole what goes into the ground. Also, he qualifies in circumference, and on top of that animated flag-pole is the saddest face I ever saw. His eyebrows hangs down and matches his mustache, which don't show enough animation to harbor uh dandruff germ.

The pouches under his tired-looking eyes, looks like they had been squeezed dry and then left to shrivel up in the sun like the shell of uh walnut. The Adam's apple in his lean neck is so active that I expects it to knock his hat off at any time, and his speckled hands wobbles limp-like around his bulgy knees. He yawns, slow and deliberate-like, when I stares at him, and then yanks uh couple uh times on the rope he's holding, which appears to extend around the rock.

"What you doing with Eveline Ann?" I asks, and he yawns some more.

He hauls out uh plug of tobacco, looks it over carefullike, and puts it back. I opines that he's too tired to bite.

"This her?" he asks, pointing at my burro.

"Sure!" I replies.

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He relaxes against the rock and scratches his left leg just above where the boot leaves off.

"Your jack?"

"Yes, mine!" I snaps. "You're leading my burro! Sabe?"

He looks the burro over in uh sad sort of uh way, and then nods sort uh solemn-like.

"Don't make no difference," he states, taking lots uh time between each word. "It'll be all the same uh million years from now."

"Well, mister," says I, "you got more gall than any one I ever seen. Do you intend to appropriate my mule right under my nose?"

"Might as well," he drawls. "You opines that there ain't no gold, and unless yuh got faith enough to prospect yuh ain't got no use for uh burro. Yuh can't wear it on your person, and—your gun is empty, anyway. Sabe?"

"You're uh philosopher are yuh?" I asks, but he shakes his head.

"No," says he. "No, Texan. My maw's folks were from Arkansaw. I was born in—in—ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Must be the climate. I forgot where I was born. Don't matter none."

"No," I agrees, "it don't make no material difference. I reckon we can come to an understanding without your birthplace. Were yuh born tired?"

"I—ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m! I don't know. All I know is that I've been tired for—ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Tired for uh long time. Maybe it's the climate."

"Stranger around here?" I asks, and he nods.

"I hope so. If I thought I wasn't I'd be on my way. I'm wanted."

"What for—exceeding the sleep limit?"

"Sleep limit? Huh! I wouldn't put shells in that gun if I was you, mister. One loaded gun around here is enough. I don't know your disposition so I plays safe. Sabe?"

"Sheriff at Blue Nose," I states, offhand like, but he just nods and yawns.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m! Just one?"

"We only have one to uh county in this State," I informs him.

"Poor system," he states. "One sheriff is enough to handle ordinary men, but I ain't ordinary."

"No, you're not," I agrees.

"I'm 'Hair-Trigger' Hollibaugh."

He yawns wide and unhandsome and pats the long Colt, which hangs near his knee.

"Ever hear of the Hollibaugh tribe?" he asks. "The longer the family runs the tougher they gets, and I'm the last survivor. They has all died with their boots on."

"Too sleepy to take 'em off?" I asks.

"Mister Man," he puts one hand on my knee and stifles uh yawn over his wide mouth with the other. "Mister Man, don't chide me. The Hollibaughs don't let no man chide 'em. Who might you be?"

"I might be General Funston or Admiral Dewey," says I, sort uh peeved like, "but I ain't. Did yuh ever hear of 'Comanche' Cal?"

He looks at me, solemn-like for uh moment, and then hands me the lead-rope of that burro.

"Lead your own stock, Comanche," says he. "Also and moreover, yuh might as well fill up your gun. Yuh never can tell what we'll meet. If you're short uh ca'tridges yuh might fill out uh my belt, seeing as we both use the same size."

"Where do yuh figure we're going?" I asks.

He yawns uh couple uh times, and tugs at his mustache.

"I don't know, Comanche. Doggone me—ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Doggone me if I know. I reckon we might as well go down and kill that sheriff. I believe in taking folks by surprise. There ain't no limit to what you and me can do together. Comanche Cal, eh? Well, dog my cats! You sure are deceiving to look at."

"Yes," says I, "and I'm also deceiving to talk to. You got any mode uh locomotion except your feet?"

"I—ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m-m! Must be the climate. Nope. That's your stuff on the burro. I came past your camp, so I takes what I wants. I don't reckon I left much of anything. Yuh see," he explains in his tired voice, "I'm uh Hollibaugh. We takes what we want. My paw was lynched for stealing uh cow, and my grandpaw was shot for coveting another man's hawgs. Grandpaw loved pork right up to the time he died.

"I BEEN sojourning over in uh place called Maverick. Ho, hum-m-m! Must be the climate. Got into uh poker-game over there. Inhabitants are fish-eaters. Thought I was sucker enough

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to go to sleep in uh poker-game. They rings in uh cold deck in uh jack-pot. They didn't know I was uh Hollibaugh. I got peeved and stuck up the whole bunch for what they had. One feller, name uh Kelly, thought I meant table stakes, and tried to hold out on me.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m! Got uh posse after me pretty soon. Shot my hoss from under me and then crippled my pack-animile. I went to sleep in the brush and they missed me. No, sir, I ain't got nothing left but my gun, clothes, self-respect and the traditions of the Hollibaughs, and I been on foot for so long that my pants hungers for the squeak of uh saddle. Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m-m-m!"

I sets down and rolls uh smoke, and when I gets it to going good I looks up at him but he don't say nothing. He's snoring like uh grizzly in the Winter-time.

I steps over, slips his gun loose and prods him in the stummick with it.

"Hair-Trigger," says I, "give me back that pocketbook yuh got up at my camp."

He opens his eyes slow-like, busts into uh wide yawn, and produces the article referred to from inside his shirt.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m!" he yawns. "Gosh, I wish yuh hadn't woke me up. I was dreaming, and I sure love uh good dream. Was that your wallet?"

"Whose did yuh think it was?" I snaps. "You got it on top uh my roll uh blankets, didn't yuh?"

"Uh-huh. Ho, hum-m-m-m-m! That ain't no sign it belongs to you. Nothing much in it anyway. I just took it so it wouldn't be lonesome. If that's all the money you got we better rob uh bank right away. Do you believe in dreams, Comanche?"

"What kind uh dreams?" I asks.

"Aw, just dreams. When you woke me up I was dreaming that I wasn't uh bit sleepy."

"I don't believe in 'em," says I. "Your stomach is out of order. Maybe it's your liver. Anyway, you needs medical attention."

We journeyed to Blue Nose, me and Hair-Trigger and Eveline Ann. The last-mentioned is my burro. Eveline is of the male gender, but it seems sort uh home-like to hear uh woman's name around camp, so I misnames the brute.

The two ends of him ain't mates in disposition. If yuh approaches him from the front he'll try his dangdest to kiss yuh, but if yuh gets near his rear end yuh better hang on to your hat. Eveline can kick the soda out of uh biscuit and never crack the crust.

Hair-Trigger makes the mistake of trying to lean his tired carcass on that jack's rump, with the result that Eveline kicks him so hard in the belt-buckle that the suspender buttons snaps off the back of his pants.

"I could love that animile," states Hair-Trigger, while he rustles enough baling-wire to hold up his pants. "Some day I'll buy him from yuh, Comanche. He woke me up just as uh Injun was going to annex my scalp."

"Why not buy an alarm-clock?" I asks, but he shakes his head.

"I've tried 'em all. They don't do nothing but make me sort uh restless when they explodes."

"You ever bothered with insomnia?" I asks.

"I don't know," says he. "While I was on my pilgrimage over into this country I slept in an old cabin, and I got something. I hung my shirt on uh ant-hill for uh spell, and then boiled the thing. I ain't felt nothing there since. What you noticed me scratching was uh wood-tick bite. Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m! Must be the altitude."

I don't reckon yuh ever heard uh Blue Nose. It ain't on no map. It is one uh them places that's partial to spittin'-tobacco and justifiable homicide. The nearest railroad is sixty miles away, from whence uh stage runs time and again to Blue Nose. It carries the mail, when there is any to carry, which ain't often. Nobody in Blue Nose has any friends to write to. If they had they wouldn't be in Blue Nose.

To all appearances the city is dormant when we arrive, and when Hair-Trigger sees that one dusty, deserted street, he smiles like he had found his heart's desire.

"I been looking for uh place like this for years," he states, as we pilgrims toward uh hitching-post.

"Not me," says I. "I ain't like uh wounded animal thataway. I don't hanker to sneak into some secluded place to cash in my chips. I hope I never has to point with pain to the fact that I died in uh place like Blue Nose. What do yuh suppose Saint Pete would say to uh corpse from here?"

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"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m!" yawns Hair-Trigger. "I don't know Peter, but if he said anything he'd either be loco, drunk or prodigal with his talk. I saw enough in your pocket-book to ask yuh to set 'em up, Comanche."

We snubs Eveline to the rack, and enters that grog-shop. She sure is one busy-looking place uh business.

There's uh feller reclining half in uh chair and half on uh card-table, with his head resting on his arms, and he's snoring plentiful. Hair-Trigger looks him over with envious eyes, and yawns.

The bartender is humped over in uh chair at the rear, busy as uh bee at something. Hair-Trigger sniffs, and I sniffs, and then Hair-Trigger grins.

"Bananas!" he whoops. "Dog-gone! I never expected to find one in this part of the world."

"Does smell thataway," agrees the hooch-handler, uh fat hombre, of about forty Summers and sundry whiskers. "Smells like 'em but it ain't. Nothing but just paint. Uh feller was going through here, painting signs, and he left this bottle here. I been putting some on this here picture-frame. Don't look so danged bad at that, does it?"

Hair-Trigger looks it over and yawns, so we moves over to the bar and samples the elixir.

"Right lively little city yuh got here," I opines.

"You darn well know it," agrees the bartender. "Blue Nose is about the best place west uh Boston. She's uh little quiet right now, but some day she'll hit her stride."

"Anything in sight?" asks Hair-Trigger, accepting the bartender's solicitations to sluice again.

"Well, not exactly what you'd call visible. Some day there'll be uh strike around here, and then she'll be uh hi-yu place again. Sabe?" Hair-Trigger looks over at the sleeping figure at the table, and yawns wide.

"Plenty uh room if yuh wants to sleep, stranger," offers the bartender, but Hair-Trigger shakes his head.

"I ain't—ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m! I ain't sleepy. It always makes me yawn to see uh man sleeping thataway. You spoke of uh strike; do you mean placer?"

"You darn well know it. There's uh wide pay-streak around here. Yuh see, the town was named after me. I'm 'Blue Nose' Blucher, discoverer of the Fa.e Thee Well."

"Think she's ripe for uh stampede, eh?" questions Hair-Trigger.

"Mister," pronounces Blucher, "Blue Nose pines for uh strike like uh calf for its maw. You fellers prospecting?"

"You said it," states Hair-Trigger. "I'm Hair-Trigger Hollibaugh—me. This person with me is Comanche Cal. Ever hear of him? Him and me is side-kicks, and when we can't find gold she ain't no place, eh, Comanche?"

"She ain't no place, Hair-Trigger," says I, with conviction, and Hair-Trigger busts his yawn with uh grin.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m!"

THE sleeper over at the table stretches convulsively and opens uh mouth yuh could put uh tin can into and never touch ivory. Hair-Trigger takes one look and imitates him to uh gnat's eyebrow.

"You—you—you—" stutters the figure at the table, and Hair-Trigger nods.

"Yes, yes—me. Go on, go on."

"You — you — you — you going — going — going — going to pup — pup — pup — prospect huh—huh—huh—here?"

Hair-Trigger nods and yawns and the other nods and yawns with him.

"Let—let—let—let me sus—sus—sus—sell yuh—yuh—yuh—you sus—sus—sus—some cla—cla—cla—claims."

Hair-Trigger looks the feller over, and then leans against the bar.

"Mister," says he, "you sound like you had gas on your stummick. Let me do the talking and you just nod or shake. Sabe? You got some claims?"

"Sh—sh—sh—sure. I—I—I—I gug—gug—gug—gug——"

"Nod or shake!" advises Hair-Trigger. "Placer ground?"

The person nods some industrious.

"How far from here?"

"Uh—uh—uh—uh—uh——"

"Wait!" snaps Hair-Trigger. "My mistake, old-timer," and then he turns to the bartender; "You know anything about his claims?"

"He owns uh claim on Fool Hen Crick, about three miles from here. He works just like he talks, and sleeps when he ain't working, so I don't reckon he ever got near bed-rock. I don't reckon there's anything there worth digging for, anyway."

"I—I—I—I—I—gug—gug—gug——"

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"Nod or shake!" yelps Hair-Trigger. "You don't need to go into details. If this here Blue Nose person opines wrong about your personal affairs, you just shake. Sabe? Did yuh ever find any color?"

He nods.

"I—I—I——"

"Amounts don't count!" howls Hair-Trigger. "Can't yuh keep from talking? Cripes! If talking was as hard for me—ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Must be the atmosphere. Now, you nod or shake. How much yuh want for the claim?"

"Uh—uh—uh—uh——"

"Ex-cuse me!" whoops Hair-Trigger. "Dog my cats! You're sure one hard person for to converse with. Some day you'll choke to death. Tell yuh what we'll do; you turn the claim over to me and Comanche, we'll open her up, and we'll share alike. What do yuh say?"

"You—you—you——"

"Shake or nod! Doggone yuh, shake or nod!"

The person thinks deep like for uh minute, and then begins—

"I—I—I—I'll——"

"Shake or nod!" advises Hair-Trigger, in uh hoarse whisper, and the person nods.

"Now," says Hair-Trigger, accepting another free drink, "we'll go right out to our mine as soon as we can raise uh grubstake."

He turns to the bartender, and says—

"Mister, do you know where we can raise the price of uh piece uh grub?"

"Nope, I don't. Yuh might go over and tackle old man Swigert at the bank. He's got plenty uh money, but if you can pry him loose from any of it you sure can pan gold out of uh haystack."

"Stingy?" I asks.

"Stingy!" he snorts. "Stingy? Say, that old hombre is so danged stingy he sleeps with his boots on to save the wear and tear on his socks. If I had the money handy I'd stake yuh myself."

"Well, what are we going to do?" I asks, and when Hair-Trigger telescopes back to normal, after uh convulsive yawn, he replies:

"We'll go over—ho, hum-m-m-m-m!—and make this stingy person hand us the price of some bacon and beans. The Hollibaughs are great when it comes to borrowing things. I borrowed uh quart uh alcohol from uh thirsty Injun once, and I'd uh drank it, too, but danged if I didn't go to sleep, and he stole it back. Ho, hum-m-m-m-m!"

"Now, you—you—you—" begins the spluttering one, but Hair-Trigger holds up one long freckled hand, and bids him desist.

"Pardner," says he, "don't! Wait till yuh make uh stake and then yuh can hire an interpreter. Right now yuh resembles uh scratched phonygraft record."

We takes another shot uh hooch all around, and Hair-Trigger cocks his hat on top of his sad face, and sings in uh voice that sounds like filing uh saw in uh loose vise:

"Old man Swigert, was uh generous jigger, and he bought uh grub-stake for little Hair-Trigger. With uh hi-yi and uh hi-yi and uh hi-yi, yippi aye."

Hair-Trigger over-shot when he sings of Swigert's generosity. That bank uh Blue Nose wasn't what you'd call uh palace uh finance, but the proprietor sure qualified as uh warden for wayward dollars. Every cent that old hombre had in his bank was kept in solitary confinement, and I'll bet that every check had to prove an alibi before he pardoned the cash. He glares at me and Hair-Trigger, from where he's bending over uh desk, writing the obituary of the last ten cents he spent for chewing tobacco, and snarls—

"Well, what do yuh want now?"

Hair-Trigger sizes up the layout, and yawns wide.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m! What yuh say?"

"I said what I said, and you heard me!" snaps the old turtle. "What do you want now? Hear that?"

"Let me see," grins Hair-Trigger. "What did I ask for the last time?"

The old sidewinder gets up from his table and peers close-like at us.

"Was you ever here before?" he demands.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m! Danged if I know," states Hair-Trigger. "You spoke just like I'd been here before. Do you believe in reincarnation?"

"I don't believe nothing I can't see!" snorts Swigert.

"Good system," replies Hair-Trigger. "Ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Must be the climatic conditions. Uh feller done told me about you, but I couldn't believe it until I saw yuh. Dog—my—cats! He sure was right."

"What did he say?" demands the old pelican. "What'd he say, eh? Said I was stingy, eh? Said I was, didn't he?"

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"Nope," yawns Hair-Trigger, tugging at his dilapidated whiskers. "Said he wouldn't say uh word against yuh, Mister Swigert. Said he didn't have to, 'cause you're uh mind-reader, and you know what folks think. He said he thought you was stingy as ——. He didn't come right out and say that yuh was—he just thought yuh was. Sabe? Ho, hum-m-m-m!"

"Well, I ain't!" howls Swigert, pounding on uh table. "I ain't stingy. I'm careful—that's all. What you fellers want, anyway?"

Hair-Trigger yawns and pats himself on the chest.

"I'm Hair-Trigger Hollibaugh—me. Ever hear of the Hollibaughs? Mining engineers—whole fambly. Born with second sight. Invented seventeen ways uh saving gold. Honest as uh hot day is long, and honorable from the cradle to the grave. This person with me is Comanche Cal, expert on amalgamation. What I can't save he can. Sabe? Ho, hum-m-m-m! Must be something in the climate."

"Well!" yelps the old rooster. "What do yuh think this is—uh prospect? This is the bank uh Blue Nose—not uh mine!"

Hair-Trigger smothers uh yawn with his hand, glances cautiously around and then whispers confidential-like to Swigert:

"Listen: me and Comanche has gone into pardnership with uh feller who has uh claim up on Fool Hen Crick. We know what we're talking about when we say it's richer than anything Alder Gulch ever showed. Want uh fourth interest? All that will cost yuh will be enough to grubstake me and Comanche for uh month or two—say uh hundred and fifty dollars. You'll—ho, hum-m-m-m-m! You'll get rich. Sabe?"

The old ground-hog draws his lips so close together that his chin and nose shakes hands with each other, and squints at us like uh badger full uh cayenne pepper.

"I will, will I?" he howls. "You say I will, do yuh? Doggone, your panhandling souls, get out uh here! Stake yuh? Why, I'd sooner give it to uh coyote. Gold-hunters ——! Grub-hunters is what you are. All you wants is to live off somebody else. Prospecting parasites!"

That ain't all he said, but it's sufficient. Telling uh story in polite society sort uh hampers direct quotations. Anyway, it ain't going to shock nobody to say that he called us uh lot uh unprintable names, while I absorbs several cigarets.

After a while he seems to have run out of mean things to say, and is panting hard from the exertion.

"Well," says I, "I hates an argument. If you believe half the things you've said about me and Hair-Trigger, I'd opine that we ain't going to get that grub. What do you think, Hair-Trigger?"

"Think!" howls Swigert. "Think? Say, that cross between uh string-bean and uh shot uh morphine went to sleep ten minutes ago."

Hair-Trigger yawns and pushes his hat back off his eyes.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m! Seems close in here. What did you say, Mister Swigert? Do we get that stake?"

DO YOU know what uh riot gun is? Yuh take uh ten-gage shotgun-muzzle-loader preferred—and saw off the barrels until she's about half the usual length. Uh riot gun ain't so much in itself—it's all in knowing how to load it.

First yuh take uh quart uh powder and divide it into two parts—one part for each barrel. Tamp it down tight, using uh crowbar and old newspapers, felt hats or gunny-sacks. Next yuh add uh couple uh door-knobs, two or three feet uh heavy chain, add uh dash uh horseshoe-nails and stove-lifters, and yuh might include the horseshoe if you're playing in hard luck.

Now, all yuh needs is caps on the nipples and supreme faith in your ability to take punishment. It is fully guaranteed to annihilate everything within half a mile and within uh hundred-yard radius. What uh riot gun does at close range is awful to behold, 'cause it does everything except write the obituary of the deceased.

I've beheld their gruesome execution, and I reckon Hair-Trigger had too, 'cause me and him hung in the doorway of that bank for uh second or two before we can claw our way out, and I'm betting that nobody, no matter how thirsty, ever entered that saloon with greater dispatch.

Blue Nose Blucher stops painting long enough to set out that bottle, and our third-interest pardner heeds our loud call to irrigate.

"Get it?" asks Blucher.

"Nope," replies Hair-Trigger. "We—ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Dang this climate! We

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would if we'd uh stayed another minute."

"You don't mean to say that old Swigert offered to stake yuh?" exclaims Blucher, spilling hooch all over the bar, in surprise.

"I don't think so," replies Hair-Trigger. What did he offer us, Comanche?"

"Ten feet head start," says I.

"You—you—you——"

Our pardner starts his usual oration, but Blucher signals him to stop.

"Let me tell it, Lafayette," says he. "You fellers ain't been properly introduced to your pardner, have yuh. Let me make yuh used to Lafayette John Paul Jones. Lafe has an impediment in his speech."

We shakes hands with him, and wishes him many happy birthdays, and he manages to dig up enough to pay for uh round.

"Impediment?" says Hair-Trigger. "You got an impediment, Lafie?"

"I—I—I—I—" begins Lafe, but Hair-Trigger yells—

"Nod or shake, dad bust your hide!" and Lafayette John Paul Jones nods.

Hair-Trigger yawns over his drink, and says to Blucher——

"What was you going to tell us uh while ago, in Lafie's behalf?"

"Lafe tells me that if yuh can't raise enough for uh stake out of old man Swigert yuh can have his. He orates that he's got enough for two weeks in his cabin at the mine."

"Cripes!" explodes Hair-Trigger. "Is that uh fact? I didn't think we was gone long enough for him to tell yuh all that. Is that right, Lafe?"

"Uh—uh—uh—uh—uh——"

"Nod or shake! Gosh A'mighty, man! Either do that or write it out."

Lafe nodded.

Well, we has uh few more on each other, and then me and Hair-Trigger goes after our rolling stock. Eveline has resented our inattention to such details as dinner by eating up my coat. Eveline Ann's ancestors must uh been goats, 'cause he'll nourish off anything he can get his lip over. Red shirts is pie to that jackass. Anyway, I ain't got no coat, so I wails loud and long and kicks the jack in the floating ribs.

"Never get mad at uh burro or uh woman, Comanche," advises Hair-Trigger. "Give 'em all the credit in the world when they performs right, and forgive 'em when they does things wrong. It's their privilege and inherited rights to do things wrong. Sabe?"

"You'd have Socrates skinned four ways from the jack if you'd keep awake," says I. "But philosophy don't restore no coats. I pines uh heap for that coat, Hair-Trigger."

"Did I or did I not see uh coat hanging on the walls of the den of iniquity we just left?" he wonders aloud. "Maybe I dreamed it, Comanche, but I feels certain sure that on one uh them four walls I has observed the top garment of the male sex. You might investigate, and thereby fill uh long-felt want."

I wanders back and finds that for once Hair-Trigger had not dreamed it.

"What's she worth?" I asks, pointing at the coat.

"That coat?" asks Blue Nose. "Huh! It ain't mine, but I don't reckon the owner is where he'll need it. Yuh see, the feller what owned it was uh sheriff from Horse Heaven. Not having studied geography fluently he mistakes the boundaries of his own county and comes over here to arrest one of our prominent citizens.

"Official jealousy arises in the breast of 'Sassafras' Simpson, our sheriff, when he hears of the invasion, so we ships the Horse Heaven sheriff home to his widow, and auctions off his horse. Some of our right-minded citizens takes what money he's got in his pockets, and buys him uh nice shiny black suit to be shipped in. It was uh suit that Zeb Holden has had in stock for years and, while it ain't exactly suitable for ordinary wear it was good enough to put under ground. It helps Zeb out that much, and it don't hurt the sheriff's looks none to speak of. That coat was left over, and if yuh needs it you're sure welcome to it."

I looks the garment over, tucks it under my arm, and thanks everybody concerned. Hair-Trigger is asleep against the rack, and acts peevish when I wakes him up.

"Dang it all!" he yawns. "Seems like something always wakes me up when I'm half way through uh pleasant dream. Well, I reckon we got to do some digging if we're going to start uh stampede."

"What good is uh stampede going to do us?" I asks. "Where do me an you profit?"

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m! Ain't that old banker uh stingy old wood-rat? I'll bet he's got uh lot uh money in that place uh his, Comanche."

"Uh-huh." I agrees. "Also, he's got uh riot gun. You can't do nothing with

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riches when your hide is full uh door-knobs and nails, Hair-Trigger."

"I'm uh Hollibaugh," he states. "No Hollibaugh ever passed out from the effects of uh riot gun. Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m! Must be something in this air. Darn his old hide! I'll bet that the sight uh nuggets would give him apoplexy. Yes sir, I'll bet —huh! You and me is going to wake up that hamlet, Comanche Cal. Dog—my—cats, I'm glad I met yuh. Picture-painting bartenders, stuttering Jones and stingy bankers. Whoo-e-e-e-e! Yes, sir, we'll cause 'em all to come and see. Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m!"

ME AND Eveline Ann and Hair-Trigger Hollibaugh found Lafayette John Paul Jones's mine on Fool Hen Crick. The faded location-notice proclaims it to be the Golden Gob Mining and Milling Company. We finds the cabin and grub cache, which consists of uh few beans, some flour and uh hunk uh bacon the size uh your fist.

"Two weeks, eh?" says I. "Stuttering Jones must be uh vegetarian."

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m!" yawns Hair-Trigger, over that piece uh bacon. "Mountain air always makes me sleepy. Whoo—e—e—e—e! This sure is one big layout, Comanche. Dog—my—cats! Let's me and you go and see how much work he's got done. Saw uh place down the crick where he's been doing uh little work."

Little was the right word. He drifts in about twenty feet through loose gravel, builds uh few feet uh flume, and then I reckon he must uh went to sleep on the job or else somebody came along and he took the rest of his time to tell 'em hello. I takes one look at the place and then opines aloud that this ain't no place to find gold.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m!" groans Hair-Trigger, locking his boots around uh boulder, and stretching until he's plumb grotesque. "Gold is where yuh find it, and stampedes are where yuh start 'em. That old man Swigert ain't no good citizen, is he, Comanche?"

"What's that got to do with the Golden Gob?" I asks.

"Being uh white man covers the proverbial ounce of prevention, Comanche. Did yuh ever notice what uh lot uh misery eventually comes to uh feller what don't treat his feller men white? I'm uh Hollibaugh—me. We go and get things. Would you take what ain't rightfully yours if yuh had uh chance, Comanche?"

"I would not," I states. "I complies with the law."

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Everybody to their own ideas. Some folks just covet, but the Hollibaughs take. Ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Must be the climate. Reckon we might as well dig uh while to keep from going to sleep. You take the shovel and clean out the flume while I goes up to the cabin and rustles uh small feed. I'm hungry."

I shovels for about an hour and then ambles up to the cabin to eat. I finds some bread burning in the oven and burnt bacon on top uh the stove, and Hair-Trigger asleep on the bunk.

"Here! You copper-riveted sleep-consumer!" I yelps. "You're uh —— of uh cook!"

He raises up and looks at me dumping things off the stove, and then stretches himself plentiful.

"Enough for one meal and you incinerates it!" I yelps.

"Getting excited is bad for your system, Comanche," he states. "Never let yourself get above normal. Doggone. I dreamed of gold again. You believe in dreams?"

"What kind uh dreams?"

"I dreamed that we made uh million out of the Golden Gob."

"I don't," says I. "You need some paregoric."

We heaves boulders for uh while, after we eats what is left, and then we plans on our future operations. I outlines everything and Hair-Trigger fails to disagree on uh single point, 'cause he sleeps all through the meeting.

The next morning he scratches his back on the corner of the cabin, and opines thusly:

"Comanche, we can't work if we don't eat, so I'm going to Blue Nose and see about uh stake. Yes, sir, I'm going to take that community jackass and either bring back uh load uh grub or Blue Nose will regret it. Sabe?"

"Going to get it from old man Swigert?" I asks, sarcastic-like.

"Maybe. Ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Must be the climate."

"You can't get nothing in Blue Nose,"

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I argues, but Hair-Trigger pats himself on the chest and tugs at his whiskers.

"I'm uh Hollibaugh, and the Hollibaughs gets what they go after. The trouble with you, Comanche, is that you're too honest. You'll never get no place. I thought that me and you was going to mix like mud and water, but—ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m-m! Well I'll go down and see how she looks.

"Ripe for uh stampede, eh? If yuh never see me again, Comanche, don't feel hard against me. The Hollibaughs inherits, and paw was lynched for rustling cows, and grandpaw was killed with uh strange hawg in his arms. Ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Must be the climate. So long."

He weaves off down the trail with Eveline Ann, while I sets down and reviews things. In the first place I ain't Comanche Cal—whoever he is or was. Hair-Trigger just took it for granted. I starts to feel sorry for myself, but happens to realize that I ain't no worse off than I was before I met this here sleepy freak.

I don't do uh tap uh work all day, and the next morning I starts in right where I left off the day before. My breakfast was slim. In fact I never had uh slimmer one in my life. I took uh drink out of the flume and tightened up my belt.

"Fool Hen Crick," says I, aloud, "I'm going to bid yuh adoo. I'm going out and kill me some breakfast, cook it on that little rusty stove, and then I'm going to foller in the footsteps uh one slumbering hombre named Hair-Trigger Hollibaugh, the same uh which has annexed my burro under false pretenses. He ain't coming back, and it ain't in my heart to chide him for it.

"I'm going to seek fresh pastures. Milk and honey don't thrive in the land uh cactus, mesquite and lizards, so yours sincerely is on uh pilgrimage to find greener vegetation."

Fool Hen Crick don't rise up and dispute my right to navigate, so I pilgrims up the gulch. Pretty soon I busts into the domestic life of uh couple uh sage-hens. The first one was going north, so I hits it in the south end, which makes it unfit for anything except uh pillow. I cuts the head off the other. It looks uh heap ancient, but even tough meat keeps uh man from starvation, so I pilgrims back towards the little cabin with joy in my soul.

Do I turn kitchen mechanic? I do not!

I don't get quite to the cabin when uh bullet shaves my ear, and proclaims that I'm excess baggage around there. I immediate and soon drops into the brush and dusts the sight of my .41.

That bullet came from uh rifle, so I'm wise enough to keep down low. I hears uh faint yell off to the left uh me, and then away off in the next gulch I hears uh couple uh scattering shots. Pretty soon I sees two men on hosses, racing up the ridge.

"Well," says I, to myself, "things is looking up around Fool Hen." I sneaks low in the mesquite, and gets close to the cabin. I figures that I'm some Injun when it comes to sneaking, but just as I cranes my neck for uh peep at the shack, I hears uh twig snap. I turns sudden-like, and finds myself looking down the muzzle of uh Winchester, and back uh that gun is Lafayette John Paul Jones.

He recognizes me, too, and lowers the muzzle.

"You—you—you—you——" he begins, and I nods.

"Uh-huh—me. What's going on around here?"

"Sus—sus—sus—strike," he manages to splutter.

"Don't jerk your hands thataway when yuh talk!" I yelps. "Ain't yuh got no sense? That gun is cocked. Did you say 'strike'? Nod or shake."

He nods.

"Where?" I asks.

"Huh—huh—huh—huh—huh——"

"Let down that hammer, you carbonated coyote!" I whoops. "You mean that uh strike has been made in this district? Nod or shake."

He nods and then starts spluttering again—

"You—you—you——"

"Look here, Lafe," says I, "I hate to kill yuh—I hate to kill any man who is crippled in the speech, but just as sure as the Lord made little apples I'm going to do it if yuh don't lay that gun down. Who made this strike?"

"Ha — Ha — Ha — Hair-Tut — Tut — Tut——"

"Hair-Trigger?" I asks, and he nods.

We looks foolish-like at each other, and I fumbles for uh smoke.

"Where's Hair-Trigger?" I asks, but Lafe looks blank-like at me for uh minute, and then starts—

"I—I—I—I—I——"

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"If yuh don't know, shake your danged head!" I yelps, and he shakes.

"Well," says I, "if this property is good I'm uh third-owner, Lafayette," but he shakes his head some more.

"You—you—you—ain't gug—gug—gug—gug—got n—n—n—n—n—nothin' tut—tut—tut—tut—to pup—pup—pup—prove it," he orates, prespiring fluently and waving his arms, and when I comes to consider it I finds that he's perfectly right.

"All right, Lafayette and So Forth Jones," says I. "Far be it from me to take what ain't rightfully mine. Over in your cabin is uh coat what belongs to me. I take what's mine. Is that proper?"

"Uh—uh—uh—uh——"

"Shake or nod," I advises, so he nods.

I gets my coat, and then pilgrims off down the trail. About uh mile from the Golden Gob I hears somebody yell—

"Git off from here!"

I sees uh man in the trail, with uh rifle in his hands.

"What's the main idea?" I yells, stopping short, of course.

"This is all located, stranger," he yells back. "You'll have to locate some other place."

I nods and goes way around. I'd walk uh mile out uh my way any time to keep from getting killed. About half uh mile further on uh bullet lifts my hat off, and I stops to pick it up.

"Doggone yuh, don't come on my land!" howls uh voice, and I don't have to peer close to see that it's old man Swigert. "Keep off!" he warns, so I takes uh little side trip again.

I TAKES off my hat to Hair-Trigger Hollibaugh. He sure is some little starter. I pilgrims almost into Blue Nose, when I meets that saloon-keeper, Blue Nose Blucher, galloping some fast on uh bronc. He pulls up and shakes hands with me some industrious.

"You're uh little late, ain't yuh?" I asks.

"See old man Swigert?" he pants, and I nods.

"He's located," I tells him, and he looks relieved.

"That's good. Me and him is in pardnerships. He beat it to make the location and I stayed to buy out your pardner. You sold out yet?"

I shakes my head.

"Want to?" he asks, and I nods.

"How much? I'll pay yuh what I did your pardner. Is that fair?"

I nods and he pulls out uh roll what would choke uh burro. He peels off eight hundred dollars and hands it to me.

"I'll give yuh the rest after the first clean-up," says he, and I nods some more. I find it pays to keep your mouth shut.

"Where's my pardner?" I asks, and he waves his hand toward town and gallops on.

I kisses that roll uh bills, and takes off my hat to Hair-Trigger once more. When I gets into that deserted village I sees uh small speck out in the desert, going away from that land uh strikes.

I pilgrims over to uh restaurant and helps myself to uh feed that somebody forgot to eat, annexes uh bottle at Blucher's place, and then looks into the bank. I rolls uh smoke, and pilgrims away in the footsteps of Hair-Trigger Hollibaugh and Eveline Ann.

It gets cool after sundown, so I finds use for that coat. I sleeps under uh mesquite that night, and gets an early start. It's about ten o'clock when I drops over uh little bluff and sees Eveline Ann. He's grazin' peacefully, so I sneaks up soft like and finds Hair-Trigger at his favorite occupation. I takes his gun.

"Nice morning," I states in something above uh whisper, and he sets up some sudden-like. He feels for his gun but it's missing, and he gazes at me, reproving-like.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m-m!" he yawns. "I didn't expect yuh, Comanche."

"No?" says I. "Ain't that queer? What did yuh leave me for?"

"You're too—ho, hum-m-m-m-m-m!—honest, Comanche. You and me don't hitch. Sabe?"

"You didn't hesitate to take my jack," I reminds him, pointing at Eveline Ann.

"That's plumb right," he admits, yawning some more. "But mules ain't got no morals. Didn't I start some stampede, though."

"Uh-huh," I admits. "You sure did. How?"

Hair-Trigger grins and reaches in his pocket. He takes out some objects and lets 'em roll out on the ground.

"Nuggets!" I yells, but Hair-Trigger yawns and grins some more.

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"Look fine, don't they? That's what Blue Nose thought. All I did was to roll 'em on the bar, and the stuff was all off. Nothing but hammered .41 bullets. Just plain lead. Remember that paint the bartender was using on that picture-frame? That wasn't paint at all. It was gilt. Gilded bullets! Gosh A'mighty! Picture-painting bartenders, stuttering prospectors, stingy bankers and gilded bullets. Dog—my—cats!"

"Why didn't yuh let me in on that bank-robbery?" I asks, offhand like, and he breaks right off in the middle of uh yawn.

"Bank robbery!" he exclaims. "Bank—ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Must be the air. Dog—my—cats! You sure are one deductive person, Comanche. How'd yuh know I robbed that bank?"

"There wasn't nobody left to guard it," I states, and he grins.

"Uh-huh," he admits. "Stingy old pelican! All he left was three hundred in silver. That person sure hustled to stake uh claim. Pays him back for the names he called us."

"I'll take it," I states, patting the barrel of my six-gun, but Hair-Trigger yawns and shakes his head.

"You can't, Comanche. You're too danged honest. Sabe? This is stolen money."

"That ain't it uh tall," says I, pointing at the lapel of my coat. "This is the reason, Hair-Trigger."

He examines me some close like and then leans back and yawns.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Ain't that the truth? Sheriff! Well, dog—my—cats! Comanche Cal, you sure are one deceiving person for to see. The money is in the pack on the burro. Do I have to go, too?"

"No," says I, "I ain't no danged Shylock. I'm uh white man, and I comes from an honest family. You go in peace."

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Much obliged. I reckon I'll be going on. I'm sorry you're so danged honest, Comanche, 'cause me and you sure could uh pulled—oh, well. Give everybody my regards, will yuh?"

I nods, and watches the last of the Hollibaughs top the first sand-hill. On the top he stretches his long carcass in uh farewell yawn, and ambles out uh sight, and me and Eveline Ann pilgrims towards the sun.

I holes up about forty miles from Blue Nose, and communes with myself for days. I got too much money on my conscience, and I mourns uh heap when I consults my immortal soul and finds that I'm an accessory to Hair-Trigger Hollibaugh.

Finally I gets Satan behind me, along with Eveline Ann, and we pilgrims back to Blue Nose. It's been two weeks since I left there, but the town ain't changed uh bit. I ties Eveline to the rack in front of the bank, and goes inside.

Old Swigert is right where he was the first time I saw him—humped over that table, trying to smell out uh missing cent. He glances at me and growls—

"Well, what do yuh want now?"

"What did I want the last time?" I asks.

He peers at me for uh minute and then gasps—

"You here again? My ——!"

I lifts that sack uh coin up on the window-ledge and shoves it toward him.

"Here's your old three hundred silver dollars," says I. "Take 'em and get glad."

The old pelican grabs them and loves them like they was human. I reckon that dollars must say sweet things to uh feller like him.

"All here?" he asks. "All here?"

"You didn't think I'd spend any of it, do you?" I asks, peeved-like.

"Hello, Comanche."

I turns and hands that roll uh bills back to Blue Nose Blucher, and the shock almost petrifies him.

"Well!" he explodes with joy. "Well, what do yuh know about that?"

Old Swigert looks at Blue Nose, and Blue Nose looks at Swigert, and that danged old pack-rat smiled for the first time since he knew uh dime from uh dollar. Also, he shakes hands with me.

"Comanche," says he, "I'd admire to know how yuh got this money, and also how yuh happens to bring it back. That strike was uh frost."

"I never made no strike, and I ain't saying who got that money. I brought it back 'cause I'm honest. Sabe?"

"That's what Hair-Trigger says," grins Blue Nose. "We thought he was the one, so we locks him up, but he don't do nothing but yawn and grin when we asks him who done it."

"Hair-Trigger in jail?" I asks, and they nods.

"We locked him up on general principles," says Swigert.

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"Well," says I, "there's your money. Now, I reckon I'll move on."

"Set down," orders old Swigert. "You're uh novelty around here. Honest men ain't no drug on this market. Can yuh shoot?"

"Yes, I reckon," says I, and Swigert grins and says:

"Comanche, we need yuh. Ever since Sassafras Simpson, our sheriff, nailed that sheriff from Horse Heaven, he's been packing uh chip on his shoulder. Uh little hombre comes here day before yesterday, gets full uh hooch, and mistakes that chip for uh target. He aims uh little low, and we plants Sassafras on the hill. Now, we ain't got no sheriff. How'd yuh like the job, eh? We can get yuh appointed for the rest of Simpson's term and it's uh cinch to elect yuh next Fall. What do yuh say?"

"Thanks," says I. "Give me the keys of the jail."

I pilgrims over for uh drink and then goes down to the little jail. Hair-Trigger is asleep and I has uh hard time to wake him up. After dumping him off the bunk he sets up and stretches his arms.

"Ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Must be the inside air. Well, dog—my—cats! What'd they put you in for, Comanche?"

"Me?" says I. "I'm the sheriff, Hair-Trigger."

He peers at my breast and yawns some more.

"Well, dog—my—ho, hum-m-m-m-m! Sheriff, eh? I thought—well. Huh! I came back to see what I could get and I got grabbed."

"You can go now," says I. "She's uh open road, old-timer."

"You—ho, hum-m-m-m-m! You mean that I can go?"

"Free as air," says I. "I told yuh I was white."

"I can't find that blasted star no place," complains Blue Nose, from the doorway. "We've looked every place. I reckon we must uh buried it with Sassafras. What'll we do?"

I points to the star on my breast and Blue Nose grunts:

"Cripes! It's lucky we didn't bury it, now ain't it? That's the only one in the country."

"Yes," says I, "it sure was uh lucky thing all the way around."

But I wasn't thinking about Sassafras: I was thinking of the sheriff of Horse Heaven, and the coat pocket I found it in. I reckon that Hair-Trigger thought about the same thing, 'cause he left us without even uh yawn, and didn't stop to stretch until he topped the rise out of Blue Nose.

REALIZATION

BY IRA SOUTH

WHEN I was a lad, I used to read
By Summer afternoons, and nights,
Of adventurers in square-rigged ships,
Of foreign ports and splendid sights.

And I would dream upon the day,
When I should know a heaving deck,
Or beach a long-boat on the sand,
Beside some buried galleon wreck.

Now I am gone to see the world:
Nor all the eager dreams of youth,
Afire with tale of pirate gold,
Have conjured up the living truth.

The odor of the water-fronts,
The sun-white sand of coral keys;
No tale or verse may ever hint
One-half the spell of far deep seas.

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IN THE SHADOW OF PONTIAC

by HUGH PENDEXTER

Author of "The Ambush in the Pipe," "McLean Mends His Medicine," etc.

RED JENNET leaned against the log wall of the Detroit fort and toyed with the fringe on his hunting-shirt and with childlike frankness admired his belt and its gay embroidery of beads. A mink-skin cap was pushed rakishly back on his red poll, the tail hanging down over the long fiery locks. With his scalping-knife, tomahawk and small-bore rifle he was a splendid type of the border fighter; and Major Gladwin, commander at Detroit, eyed him admiringly and wished he could post him on sentry duty or send him out with the wood crew.

But Jennet was a free ranger and preferred his swaggering liberty to the discipline of service. Although but recently arrived in the Northwest Territory from the Carolinas and Virginia he had not delayed to intrude on the commander and drawlingly inform him of certain suspicions hatching out under his flaming thatch.

"An old story. You're wasting your time and losing the service a good man, Jennet," declared Major Gladwin as the ranger finished his blunt statements. "I have the utmost confidence in the Indians. Frenchmen start these stories to keep us stirred up. France quit the continent and has surrendered the frontier forts without a struggle."

"Th' Injuns ain't quit yet," persisted the ranger, thrusting his head out the small window to follow the maneuvers of the young bucks playing baggatiway.

"Not very bloodthirsty," laughed the major as shrill cries of triumph greeted the skilful throwing of the ball.

"A Injun shifts his disposition mighty quick," reminded Jennet, drawing in his head. "Leastways, that's what my experience with the Shawnee learned me. Where's this Chief Pontiac I've heard so much 'bout but ain't never seen yet? Back home th' Cherokees think he's big medicine."

"He's at the Ottawa village a little above here. He'll soon go to his Summer home on Peche Island in St. Clair—why not enter the service and go on scout duty——?"

"Thank ye kindly, Major, but I reckon I'll be beatin' back home soon," the big fellow hastily broke in. "Comin' up through the Ohio country I heard strange stories, a bit here an' a bit there. Not much ye could put yer thumb on, but all havin' a sameness that set me thinkin'. It's talked among the war-chiefs of the Cherokee at their council fires on the Tennessee an' Cumberland. It tagged me all th' way up here. There's a game afoot to strike quick an' hard at every frontier fort an' wipe out th' English."

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"Queer you should learn so much while we, who are at the heart of this bugaboo plot, hear nothing," ironically commented the commander.

Jennet did not catch the sarcasm and seriously explained:

"I had a mighty good chance. What with the Chickasaw trade jargon, a lickin' good idea o' th' Shawnee tongue, an' a sprinklin' o' French, I talked with all th' tribes I met. As it was easy for me to pass myself off as a Frenchman I didn't have no trouble. At every camp-fire something was dropped. All the tribes is mighty sore at th' French Gov'ment for quittin', but they're still strong for Frenchmen as men. Strange whispers is runnin' through the forests, Major."

"All nonsense," sneered Gladwin, speaking now with a touch of impatience. "You forest runners are always seeing things."

"Mebbe. But bloody belts has passed 'tween th' Three Fires (Chippewa, Ottawa and Potawatomi)."

"Ridiculous! Pontiac has sent peace talks many times. He has acknowledged his Gracious Majesty, King George."

"'Knowledged him as 'uncle'; not as superior," Jennet gravely corrected. "When Pontiac calls him 'grandfather,' like all the tribes call the Delaware exceptin' the Iroquois who call 'em 'nephew,' I'll feel more easy. An Injun can mean a lot in one word. I opine Pontiac reckoned on bein' boss o' th' whole Northwest Injun country. I know it's whispered from th' Maumee to th' Great Kanawha as well as through the Iroquois country that he's mad at not bein' put at th' head o' th' Western Injuns."

"Bah! A scarlet coat and a few medals will soothe his pride. Why, man, all talk about the Iroquois causing trouble is rot. They have hated and fought the French ever since Champlain led his Hurons against them."

Jennet shook his big head doggedly, and insisted, "Still it's known even below th' Ohio that th' Senecas, at least, are painted for war—a bloody belt arrived at Kekionga village a short time ago."

"Stale news," scoffed the commander. "Ensign Holmes reported the belt, and says the Great Miami village is quiet now. As long as this country is a wilderness there will be scares and rumors and forest gossip. If a tribe starts out to take few scalps from another tribe the whole border expects a raid. Without the French the Indians can do nothing; the French are whipped and admit it."

The ranger remained unconverted.

"What 'bout the arms an' 'munition comin' up th' Mississippi from New Orleans?" he demanded.

"Stores for traders," was the ready retort.

"Th' forest tops tell a different story. They whisper that they're bein' sent by Spanish agents to make Pontiac's medicine strong."

Gladwin laughed.

"Wait here a few days and you'll see Pontiac come in with white wampum for another peace talk," he said.

"Be keerful he don't hold th' belt up in reverse position. All them little tricks can mean a heap in an Injun."

"I doubt if you can teach me much about the Indian character," coldly observed the commander. "Sorry you can't join us." And as a dismissal he seated himself at a rough table and became busy with official papers.

"I read yer smoke," humorously assured the giant, lounging to the door. "But better tell yer sentinels not to let any young bucks chase their ball inside th' stockade if it should be tossed over *accidental* like. I reckon I'll scout round an' see who's gittin' them guns from New Orleans."

DESPITE Major Gladwin's confidence in his ability to cope with any situation that might develop in this early Spring season of 1763 the big ranger had exaggerated his news none. There was a strange unrest throughout the dark forests. Sinister whisperings ran along the Great Lakes to the Iroquois in New York. A secret message was being carried to all the Algonquin tribes. More than one bloody belt had been received at the Great Miami village of Kekionga on the St. Joseph River opposite Fort Wayne.

The murmuring voices had been listened to eagerly along the Monongahela and the Alleghany in Pennsylvania, and had leaped the Ohio to hiss down the Great Kanawha, bidding the red men on the Maryland and Virginia borders to be prepared. And those who heeded the call secretly chanted prophetic songs of blood and slaughter.

The commanders of the various frontier

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forts seemed to have suspected no concerted action against their posts. The Treaty of Paris had ended France's century and a half of effort to hold a continent. Men, forest-bred, like Red Jennet, however, sensed the coming storm. The very air of the silent places warned them to be on their guard. It was incomprehensible to the ranger that those in authority could expect to learn truth while remaining cooped up in stockaded forts. Where were their scouts? Probably their fragments of news were ignored by their superiors.

Jennet, safe in his rôle of Frenchman, was now taking his ease in a small encampment of the Sauk on the Maumee. He had left Detroit in disgust, yet determined to learn if the guns and ammunition being brought up the river were intended for Pontiac and his chiefs. His stop at the Sauk camp was his first step in his scheme of elimination. He planned to travel down the Wabash and Ohio to the Mississippi till he found absolute evidence concerning the guns from New Orleans.

From a clue in one village, a careless word in another, he hoped to piece together the gossip and rumors and build a convincing fact. If he was baffled he would continue on to his Southern home, leaving the Northwest to manage its own affairs while he attended to several old feuds between himself and the Cherokees.

The Sauk camp had interested him on sight because of the absence of women and children. It contained some score of warriors, and what quickened his suspicions was their attitude of expectancy. It was not a hunting-party. The warriors were waiting for something. Jennet believed they were waiting for firearms, and, being cordially received as a Frenchman, he tarried.

Speech was easy with them, as linguistically they were closely related to his old enemies the Shawnee. Then there was the Chickasaw trade jargon, commonly employed throughout the Southern country and the Mississippi Valley; and lastly, a mutual smattering knowledge of the French language. At times the conversation was carried on in two different tongues.

The leader of the Sauk was Two Knives, a middle-aged warrior. Jennet, in sounding him, told of Sir William Johnson's visit to Detroit, where he met many Indian leaders and supposed he had laid the foundations for a lasting peace. Two Knives had replied that true warriors heard no voice bidding them bury the hatchet when the voice spoke from a great distance.

"The hearts of Frenchmen are heavy," sighed Jennet. "Yet Two Knives, my uncle, would heed the voice of the mighty Pontiac, though he spoke from the other side of the stinking water."

As bait this also failed. Thereafter the ranger's most adroit efforts elicited nothing. Furthermore, he believed Two Knives had taken alarm and had cautioned the young men to watch their tongues, for none of them could be induced to reveal the purpose of their camp. Nevertheless the ranger did not consider he was wasting time by biding in the camp. With the simplicity of children the warriors might betray important secrets at any moment.

On the second day of Jennet's visit the warriors bestirred themselves at an early hour and gave every indication of having important business to transact. Then Two Knives came to him and said the entire band was to depart on a mission but would return before night; and would his French brother remain and guard the camp? Jennet readily agreed, knowing he either was being abandoned, or was about to make an important discovery. For he had no doubt but what the band, if it returned, would bring a cargo of arms.

When the men filed into the woods he had a strong impulse to scout after them. One moment he was convinced they had deserted him, the next he believed they would come back. He fought off the impulse to spy upon them, reasoning that his scalp would be drying on a hoop before this if they did not believe him to be French; believing that, they would return as they would have nothing to fear.

Near sunset he heard the sound of chanting in the forest depths. He composed himself at the foot of a tree as if asleep. Through half-closed lids he watched the band enter the opening. That they were in high spirits was evidenced by their dancing. Two of their number were carrying a burden on a litter of saplings. He closed his eyes and simulated slumber, positive he now had tangible proof to lay before Major Gladwin. The band drew nearer and it was time for him to wake up. With deep disgust he saw the burden on the litter was a keg, too small to contain arms.

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As he crawled to his feet Two Knives ran to him, his eyes glistening, and joyously announced:

"We have brandy from a trader. We hold a council to see who is to remain sober and watch over the drinkers. None of the Sauk wish to keep sober."

Another brave, a young man, ran forward, hurriedly crying:

"Our French brother is big and strong as the moose. Without any warrior to help him he could keep order among the drinkers."

Jennet grinned sourly at the naïveté of the two speeches, and reluctantly consented:

"Brothers of the Sauk, I will watch over you and see no one is killed. But first you must hand over all your weapons for me to hide. Remember, I must have all the weapons."

The last was put most sternly, for the ranger knew it was no sinecure to police an Indian debauch. His only consolation was the hope the brandy would loosen their tongues and allow secrets to escape.

Hilarious whoops of exultation greeted the ranger's offer. Each warrior had feared an unhappy fate would decree his sobriety. They clustered about him, dropping their weapons at his feet. They patted his massive neck and shoulders and grunted loudly in admiration as he peeled off his hunting-shirt and tightened his belt in a business-like manner. Two Knives went into raptures over the hairy arms and corded muscles, and exclaimed—

"How can the French chief over the stinking water be beaten when he has such warriors as this?"

"Perhaps, my uncle of the Sauk, we are not beaten yet," boasted Jennet to draw him out.

"Bloody belts! Bloody belts!" babbled a young warrior.

"The Crane is a foolish bird," rebuked Two Knives and hushing the speaker with a glance. "My children, we will now walk to the river that we may not see where our French brother hides the weapons."

Jennet gathered up the knives, clubs, axes, and bows and arrows, and concealed them in the forest. Next he hid his own arms. When he returned to the opening he found the warriors lusting to be at the keg and Two Knives keeping them back with great difficulty. The keg was broached immediately after the ranger had signaled for them to proceed, the liquor being poured into several gourds.

With the first draft the Indians commenced to dance, quickly working up to a frenzy, so potent was the effect of the spirits on their nature. Soon they were shrieking and gesturing, each endeavoring to gain an audience while he vaunted his prowess. Jennet folded his arms and leaned against a tree and listened for telltale words.

"Long Arrow can send his voice to the moon. Long Arrow is the friend of Pontiac!" boasted one warrior.

"Bloody belts! Bloody belts!" screamed the Crane, extending his clenched fists above his head in a devil's ecstasy.

"The Red Tomahawk flies down the Wabash!" yelled another.

"Drink, my children," bellowed Two Knives, refilling his gourd and tossing it off. "It is the blood of Englishmen."

Howling like timber wolves in their indorsement of this figure of speech the circle instantly contracted and jammed about the keg. In their mad haste they began spilling the liquor. Jennet sprang forward and hurled them back. Like furies they turned upon him only to be incontinently tossed aside. With less precipitation they closed about the keg, the interruption permitting Two Knives to bolt an extra gourd.

"Our French brother is a Red Moose. He shall fight beside the terrible Two Knives in the great war," proclaimed Two Knives.

"The last war against the English!" howled Long Arrow.

"Bloody belts!" shrieked the Crane. And Jennet noted Two Knives no longer rebuked him.

THE dance was resumed, the scalp-yell and the death-halloo resounding in a tremendous crescendo as the brandy turned their blood to currents of madness. Jennet now knew his work was cut for him. Walking on tiptoe, every muscle taut for action, his huge hands half raised before him, the fingers curved like claws, he circled the dancers, his gaze burning fiercely as he watched for an overt act. Any outbreak must be smothered in its incipiency.

The Crane seemed especially possessed by a devil. He beat the dancer ahead of him with his naked hands till he could strike no more. Then he leaped in front of

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the dancers and sought to lead so as to enclose the ranger in the circle. With the quickness of a mountain-cat Jennet escaped the trap, his hairy paws shooting right and left and knocking two warriors senseless.

This feat instead of exciting the anger of the warriors served to tickle their fancy; perhaps because it removed two from the list of consumers for a time. With uproarious laughter the band danced about their prostrate mates, showering them with jibes and derisive queries and not a few kicks, and advising them to "rest one sleep" before imbibing more. This ferocious merriment evaporated when it was discovered that Two Knives had taken advantage of the incident to drink out of turn.

The infuriated braves fell upon him and would have killed him with their naked hands had not Jennet waded through the tangle to the rescue. His elbows cleared a path with the insistence of piston-rods, his heavy hands falling with crushing force on arm and shoulder as he tore them from their maudlin victim and violently hurled them to the ground.

The Crane, long since worked up to a homicidal pitch, was one of those thus bruskly treated, and on regaining his feet he leaped on the back of the ranger. Jennet reached an arm over his shoulder and was startled to feel the sting of a knife drawn across his knuckles. With the roar of a bull he stooped and threw the Crane over his head. The Indian either secretly had retained a weapon or had found one. Now he was crouching for a spring, his lips drawn back in a maniacal scream. His companions, massed behind, cried encouragement and urged him to strike hard and true. Two Knives filled his gourd and clutched at a tree for support, and shamelessly exhorted:

"Kill! kill! All white blood is the same. All white men are squaws. There is room only for the red man."

"The Crane is the clan brother of Long Arrow. We are of the Great Lynx people!" howled Long Arrow.

Jennet snatched up a blanket and wrapped it 'round his left arm. Forward leaped the Crane, sounding the death-yell, the knife lunging murderously.

The ranger caught the blow on his protected arm and before the Crane could retreat he had him by thigh and shoulder. With a mighty surge he raised him above his head and hurled him at Two Knives. The Crane shot through the air like a bag of meal and broke his neck against a pine. Pandemonium reigned as the band fought for possession of the knife. Again the ranger bowled them right and left and managed to secure the weapon and throw it into the river.

"The Three Fires send bloody belts to the Sauk!" roared the befuddled Two Knives as he tried to draw more drink.

The Crane was forgotten as with a whoop the Indians rushed to the keg and knocked their leader aside. Jennet spat in disgust at the sickening scene, then scowled as he noted how the shadows were deepening. It would be difficult to master them in the darkness.

"Let 'em fight it out an' kill themselves," he growled, warily keeping clear of the prancing figures. "They've dropped enough to show what sort of a game is afoot. Bloody belts from th' Three Fires, eh? Reckon that yarn 'bout Pontiac havin' a wampum belt containin' th' pledge o' forty-seven tribes an' villages measures up pretty near correct. They've pulled th' wool over Gladwin's eyes. He's a fool. 'Red tomahawk flies through th' woods,' eh? That means Pontiac has 'em all lined up to raid th' frontier. Thanks to th' brandy for so much. They must be waitin' for guns."

He threw an armful of dry stuff on the smoldering camp-fire. The night was thickening and the dancers were vague blurs. Several times warriors had blundered into him. The light of the flames turned the opening into an inferno. Two Knives was huddled up at the foot of a pine, his head resting on the body of the Crane. The warriors were mauling each other with their hands. Jennet edged in, thinking the moment ripe to place some of them *hors de combat* with his brawny fists, but was held spellbound by the appearance of a new character on the scene.

He was an Indian, closely cloaked by a blanket that hung from his head to his moccasins. He had glided unnoticed into the light, and the Indians did not sense his presence till he kicked over the keg.

As the significance of this intrusion dawned on their besotted minds the warriors with a common explosion of rage fell upon the newcomer. Over he went under a smother of clawing hands. His arms were pinioned and one warrior, more active than

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the others lifted a rock from the fire and raised it over the helpless head.

With a rumbling roar Jennet sent his moccasin into the savage's throat and knocked him aside. Then standing astride of the fallen man he fought a Homeric battle, his deep chest dripping sweat as he stood them off. He felt a movement between his feet. The next he knew the stranger was standing at his side and delivering smashing blows with the flat of his ax. The Sauk were speedily buffeted into submission and retreated. The newcomer stepped to the keg and stove in the head with his ax.

Turning back to Jennet he greeted him in a deep, sonorous voice, speaking in English—

"White man, you have saved my life after putting it in danger by giving rum to the Sauk."

"Brandy. An' none o' my givin'," panted Jennet. "They got it from some trader. Wanted me to keep order while they were drunk. Warm work—bad job. Reckon one of 'em is past mendin'." And he nodded toward the passive body of the Crane. "Jumped me with a knife an' hit a tree when I heaved him a bit. They seem to be simmerin' down now."

With no more liquor to be had the badly battered Sauk were now crawling to their bark lodges. Knowing there was no more fight in them Jennet took time to appraise the man he had rescued. He caught a glimpse of a cold, stern countenance, then the blanket foiled him. Thinking it time to resume his rôle as Frenchman he said in French—

"I'm a *coureur de bois* from Montreal, bound for the Mississippi and New Orleans."

"You are English—and you have saved my life," was the low and bitter response.

Jennet decided any subterfuge would be useless, and confessed by reminding—

"Th' Sauk an' English are brothers."

"Only the red man is brother to the red man," was the sententious retort. "I owe you a life—if ever a time comes when your life is in peril and I know of your peril I will give your life to you."

This was said with so much solemnity, as though an all-powerful autocrat were speaking instead of a blanketed Indian lacking even the ordinary trappings of a warrior, that the red-headed giant found it humorous. And with a broad grin he quizzed:

"I don't see yer coup stick. Mebbe ye don't keep count of yer coups."

The Indian's eyes blazed ominously through the opening in the hooded blanket as he replied:

"It is no coup to *save* an English life. The time will come, Englishman, when the Alleghanies will be my coup stick and each mountain pass a notch to count a coup—I have spoken."

"An' ye've spoke——big," growled Jennet, his ragged temper beginning to unravel. "Ye'd better dig out o' here. If they remember 'bout yer sp'ilin' that keg they'll put ye to th' torture.

With this warning he turned on his heel and strode to a bark lean-to on the outskirts of the camp. The Indian stared after him thoughtfully for a moment, then glided noiselessly into the forest.

SO FEELING only contempt for the drunken Sauk Jennet slept soundly till aroused by a long-drawn-out cry ringing through the forest. He opened his eyes lazily and was observing it still lacked a few minutes of sunrise when a blanket dropped over his head and his legs and arms were seized by many hands.

Nearly suffocated he flung his mighty limbs about only to have them caught with ropes of rawhides. The blanket was snatched away and he was tied between four trees in the Indian fashion, his arms and legs stretched out in what the border parlance styled "spread-eagle."

Utterly dumfounded at the audacity of such treatment he could not find words for expressing his wrath at first. When he did speak it was to choke—

"I'll raise yer ha'r for this."

Glaring up he met the leering gaze of Two Knives.

Two Knives explained—

"All night the spirit of the Crane has waited for the white man to join him on the long trail."

"Ye scum! I saved yer life. He tackled me with a knife," panted Jennet.

"Life for life," calmly retorted Two Knives. "And a red tomahawk sticks in the black post for the man who talks English."

Jennet bit his lips and wished he had restrained his outburst till in better control of himself. Two Knives had used the trade jargon but not till he mentioned the "red

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tomahawk" did the ranger realize his own mistake. He turned his head and observed the implacable hatred in the other savage faces. Two Knives stooped over him and critically examined the thongs attached to his wrists and ankles and took the extra precaution to tie a rope about his waist and pass the free end to several warriors. Should he by any means free his hands this would be hauled tight, preventing him from gaining his feet.

Satisfied the prisoner was secure Two Knives gave a signal and to the accompaniment of a mournful chant several young braves advanced with the body of the Crane and propped it against a tree near the captive. The Crane was freshly painted, and his weapons were placed at his side. Jennet now understood the significance of the shrill cry which had awakened him; it meant the warriors had found the weapons hidden by him the night before and was the signal for Two Knives and his helpers to make the capture.

"Where is the warrior who came to the camp last night?" suddenly asked Jennet in the trade jargon.

"The white man talks of dreams," replied Two Knives. "A brave warrior went away on the long trail last night and his spirit can not rest till a red scalp hangs in the Sauk village. His spirit was in the camp. Did the white man see that?"

Either the Indians had no recollection of the strange Indian, or chose to pretend ignorance. Jennet began assembling his courage to endure the ordeal which would precede death. That he was to be put to torture was obvious from the activity of two warriors in trimming the lower branches from a tree.

The murmuring among the Sauk subsided. Two Knives drew himself to his fullest height and loudly called out—

"Who talks for the Great Lynx clan."

A deep voice back of the ranger's head replied—

"Long Arrow talks for the Great Lynx."

"Does the Great Lynx send a peace talk through Long Arrow?"

"The Great Lynx howls for blood because his child has been killed by the white man."

"What will stop the howling of the Great Lynx?"

"A gift from the Sauk warriors."

"What gift does the Great Lynx ask?"

"This white man, the killer of the Crane."

"The Sauk give the white man to their brother, Long Arrow, because he is of the clan of the Great Lynx as was the Crane. What does Long Arrow bring from the Lynx?"

The warrior stepped within Jennet's range of vision and held up two handfuls of pine splinters, answering—

"He brings little fires, grandfather."

A sharp, explosive yelp shot from the spectators' lips; and Two Knives directed—

"Let the little fires be kindled that the Lynx may stop his howling."

Long Arrow selected a sharp splinter and stuck it into the ranger's shoulder and all watched to see if a muscle quivered. Jennet gave no sign; the worst was to come. The executioner selected a second splinter but before he could use it a stern voice from the edge of the forest called a command in the Sauk tongue which Jennet did not catch.

Long Arrow jumped back and turned to face the newcomer. Jennet's heart gave a leap as he recognized the cold, calm face of the strange Indian. The warriors gave way as the intruder approached and walked to the side of the prisoner. The savages watched him with tense interest. He did not appear to see the white man at his feet. Allowing his blanket to fall from his shoulders he began speaking, his voice deep and musical:

"Brothers of the Sauk; brave warriors once went forth to hunt Death and kill it. Whenever they came to a camp-fire or village they asked, 'Have you seen Death? Tell us, that we may find him and kill him.' Some said Death was here, some said Death was there. Some said he was a raven that hid nights in the moon. The warriors hunted along the Great Lakes, killing many birds but Death was not among them. Then an old chief of the Fox told them Death was a wolf. So they hunted wolves, traveling even to the country of the Dakota, and killed many wolves. Yet Death walked through the forests.

"A Potawatomi magician then told them Death was sickness; and they hunted sickness and by curing it thought to kill Death. Yet Death escaped them. At last they returned home and came upon an old woman of their own people, who lived at the headwaters of the Maumee. 'Old woman, can your medicine tell us where we can find Death? We have come to kill him,' said the

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leader. The old woman brought out a magic arrow and shot it into the air, and said, 'Follow the river in the direction of the arrow till you come to an opening where the lightning has blasted a pine tree. There you will find Death.'

"The warriors forgot they were weary and lame, and with loud shouts of joy paddled down the river till they came to a pine, broken by lightning. There they found a trader's camp. He fled as they approached and left behind a keg of brandy. This they drank, and as the madness crept into their hearts they fell to fighting among themselves. When the trader crept back they were all dead. Brothers of the Sauk, the old woman spoke with a straight tongue when she said Death awaited them by the broken pine. They found it there, just as the Crane found it there."

And with a dramatic gesture he pointed for a second at the Crane and next to a blasted pine on the river-bank. Keenly susceptible to allegorical truths the warriors remained silent and motionless, their black eyes darting from the dead warrior to the pine and then to the shattered keg, and finally back to the calm visage of the narrator. The story-teller's art had made a powerful impression on their superstitious minds. In no other form could they have been appealed to with such success.

Already they were losing sight of the white man as the cause of the Crane's death. Their sense perceptions were confused by the vivid imaginings excited by the dramatic recital. The Crane's taking off had resulted from the inevitable agency, Death, which the Sauk were now beginning to personify in the shape of the broken keg. The philosophy of the savage being mythological his opinions are as illogical as those of the child. His perceptions of every effect supply a personality for the cause.

Every phenomenon of nature is the work of a god or demon. Thus, in the demise of the Crane it was natural to perceive Death, a demon, lying in ambush by the blasted pine, and, for convenience sake, taking the guise of a keg of liquor. Jennet observed the transformation of the savage mind as the subjective began dominating the objective; and with a sigh of relief decided he was safe.

But Hate, in both savage and civilized minds, never loses sight of the focal point of desire. And in Long Arrow, clan brother of the dead man, there burned an awful lust for vengeance which blinded him to the influence now enveloping his companions. With a passionate directness that shattered the spell the stranger had woven about the others of the Sauk he cried—

"The Death that killed the Crane lies there!" And he pointed down at the ranger.

The Sauk trend of thought shifted instantly; yet still retained the impetus supplied by the fable; that is, the longing to kill Death. In place of the keg Jennet became the personification of the grim monster who killed by the blasted pine. Low murmurs of rage ran up and down the line of warriors. Two Knives voiced the thought of all as he touched the ranger with his foot and simply said—

"This is Death."

The strange Indian knew he had failed and at once adopted new tactics. Addressing Two Knives he asked—

"Will the Sauk sell their prisoner?"

"Blood calls for blood," was the sullen response.

"We will not sell even to the Ottawa," boldly added Long Arrow.

The ranger believed his fate was sealed.

But the demeanor of his strange champion again changed; and the ranger marveled to behold the serene majesty of his countenance and the soft luster of his gaze as he stretched out his hands to each warrior in turn and made his appeal a personal matter. Again the ranger could discern the working of a subtle influence. To clinch it at its climax the stranger stripped three strings of wampum from his waist, and, in the most musical and eloquent voice the ranger had ever listened to, began:

"Brothers, I bring you a present to set this prisoner free. I bring three belts of wampum."

He paused for a moment that they might come more fully under the spell; then continued, after the Algonquin custom of ransoming prisoners with belts:

"I give this string that you may cut the cords from his legs. I give this string that you may cut the cords from his hands. I give this string that you may cut the cord from his body."

And with a stately elegance of bearing seldom equaled even by the courtly French he extended the three belts to Two Knives,

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who, as one in a trance, held forth his hands to receive them.

Once more Jennet's hopes were dashed by the behavior of Long Arrow, who gave an inarticulate cry of rage, and shouted:

"He is the prisoner of the Great Lynx. The Sauk gave him to the Lynx and can not take back their gift."

The hands of Two Knives fell heavily to his side as he nodded a confirmation of the claim.

The stranger's face lost its lustrous gentleness as he slowly faced Long Arrow and offered him the belts, saying:

"I bring these belts to the representative of the Lynx clan. There are three of them. Does the Lynx receive them?"

Long Arrow turned aside his head to avoid the masterful gaze and fiercely answered—

"The Lynx people see only bloody belts."

The spectators insensibly pressed closer on hearing this final refusal. Before they could sense what had happened the profferer of belts was standing astride the prisoner, his left hand clutching Long Arrow by the scalp-lock, his right hand raised high and holding the war-ax for a death blow.

"Stand back!" he thundered. "Or the Sauk shall find Death here, in this spot where my feet stand.

Then to the astounded Long Arrow:

"You dog! You dare refuse the belts of Pontiac?"

The warrior's eyes filled with terror as the fierce face was pressed close to his, and he grunted—

"The clan of the Lynx accepts the belts."

PONTIAC watched the last of the Sauk trail into the forest. They had departed without a word. They would take down the war-post in their village. Turning to the ranger he cried:

"I have paid the life I owed you, Englishman. It has cost me twenty warriors, if not a tribe—go!"

Jennet had felt the hypnotic power of the mighty Pontiac, the would-be Cromwell of his people. In a voice of great respect he replied:

"I salute the greatest of the Ottawas. We have given lives to each other. Once I have passed from your sight there are no belts between us; for you plot war against my people. I hear the trees whispering how many Englishmen shall die, but my medicine tells me you will fail. I see a 'grave-post' by your side." And carrying his canoe to the river he leaped in and paddled away.

THE ranger reached Fort Pitt —Pittsburg — two days before Major Gladwin's message arrived, announcing that Pontiac had taken the war-path. Only one other of all the frontier forts received a warning, Fort Presque Isle—Erie. In four months more than two thousand men, women and children were killed or captured by the Indians along the borders of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. And yet at the end of the war-trail there stood the "grave-post" even as Jennet had claimed to see it. By strange fate the great Pontiac found death even as the warriors in his allegory had found it—in a keg of liquor; for that was the price paid to his assassin.

THE GOLD-HUNTER

BY RICHARD BUTLER GLAENZER

WHEN I was solemn twenty-one,
I thought I'd live in plenty, one
Fine day, so sure I'd strike bonanza soon;
But now, though nearing fifty-two,
I'm poor as dirt, unthrifty too.
My only gold and silver, sun and moon...

It isn't that the times have changed,
The reasons or the rhymes have changed,
But I myself by thirty years, my boy.
Yet had the smallest scheme of mine
Panned out, the tallest dream of mine,
Would never have—*the freedoom I enjoy.*

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VAG

by E. E. HARRIMAN

Author of "That Fool Pete," "Ritter's Pond," etc.

THE mongrel came trotting along the diagonal, brick-paved walk that cuts Central Park, Los Angeles, from southeast to northwest. Many men, who lounged on the park benches, snapped their fingers at him and some whistled coaxingly. He answered them merely by a slow wag of a dignified tail. He was lean with the healthy leanness of active life. His coat was golden brown and his eyes a good match for the coat. He weighed close to fifty pounds and had the jaw of a fighting Airedale. His nails clicked on the hard bricks.

In the warm noon sunshine, the loungers stretched lazy legs across the walk and lolled contentedly. The dog kept the median line, avoiding the feet, and his eyes scanned every face. He seemed to have some very definite aim and was going about his business staidly.

On the last bench at the northwest, sat a man who had sunken into a huddle of clothes. He was thin, tall for his one hundred and forty pounds, dull of eye and hopeless of expression. He worked for a living and got little else. He was resting after a meager lunch and it was nearly time to go back to his work.

He sat a little more erect, as he saw the mongrel coming, and his eye lighted somewhat. He neither snapped fingers nor whistled, but began to talk in a low, confidential tone. The dog stopped and his ears drew forward, then back tightly, wrinkling his forehead. He wriggled joyfully, the tremor running his entire length. He was delighted to meet a man who knew and understood dogs.

"Well, sir!" said the thin, rusty-looking man. "You're a friendly kiyi, ain't you now? All you want is to be understood, eh, boy? Just out for an airin' and lookin' for a guy who talks your language, hey? Hain't you got no folks, nowheres?"

The dog made a little throaty sound, halfway between a howl and a whine, but did not advance. He wagged his rear half violently. He was looking straight into the eyes of the man on the bench. The tone of intimate chaff delighted him.

"Well, pup, you hit the right man this time, a feller who knows all about that lonesome feelin'. He's a mongrel, too, but he ain't got the nerve to go 'round grinnin' like you do. Mebbe you're nothin' but a vag and he's a workin' man, but you got him beat. You got a lot of nerve left and he ain't got none."

The dog made that little ingratiating sound in his throat once more and the thin man patted his leg as he sucked his breath through tightly pursed lips. With a bound the dog crossed the walk and threw his forepart across the man's knees. His head went burrowing in against the bony body and the throaty tremolo took on the sound of laughter when the tears are very close. The man put an arm around him and laid his hollow cheek against his neck.

"Why, boy," he said. "Are you as glad as all that to have some one talk to you? Were you lonesome, too? Do you lie awake nights and wish and wish and wish for some one to care? Do you, boy?"

The dog was trembling now, shaking from his sensitive, black nose, to the feet braced stiffly against the bricks, as he tried to get

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closer. His heart pounded under the arm about him and his nails kept up a tiny scraping sound from the tremor of his body. The man held him a little more firmly.

"You poor mutt," he said. "Don't I know what it is? Hain't I been through the mill and ain't I in it yet, bein' ground. God knows how much I've felt it, with not a soul on earth carin' a tinker's damn if I lived, died or went to the poor farm. I'm worser'n you, boy, for the dog-catcher kills 'em easy and quick-like."

For another ten minutes the man held the dog and talked to him, getting little whining answers and soft, throaty rumblings full of ecstatic love. Each seemed to have a perfect understanding of the other's speech. Each was enjoying to the full a companionship more complete than that between man and man.

"Well, boy, I gotta go," sighed the man at last. "If I ain't back at work right soon, and old Morell finds it out, he'll yell his bull-head off and maybe fire me. I'm too old to hunt another job, so I got to hang on to this one as long as I can. Hop down, boy, and shake hands. What, don't you know what that means?"

The dog stood squarely facing the man, his forehead wrinkled and inquiry in his eyes. The man repeated the command, taking a paw in his hand and gravely shaking it after each order.

"Get me, boy? Guess that part of your education was neglected. Now pay attention!" smiling quizzically. "Shake hands."

Over and over he went through the same performance and at last the dog lifted a paw at the word of command and laid it in the hand held to receive it. Several times he did this, always grave and intent on the lesson. Each time the man patted and praised him extravagantly.

"There, boy," he said at last. "You've learned something. Got it all right now, haven't you, boy? Won't forget it, either. You ketch on like a house afire when you once get the right lead. Good boy! Bully boy!"

Delighted, the dog offered his paw once more and when it was well shaken, he frisked about in delight. The man rose from the bench and walked out to the street. The dog trotted along after him to the corner. Here the man looked down at the dog and stopped.

"Here's where we part, old boy," he said. "I hain't a chance of bein' allowed to keep you. Old Morell would boot you plumb down the hill if he ketched you in the basement. He hates dogs. Got too much wolf in his nature to like dogs. Shake hands again and don't forget me."

The brown dog put his paw in the thin, boney hand and looked up into the face above him. It was working strangely and the dog did not wag his tail or whine now. He seemed to understand that matters were not adjusting themselves in the happiest manner and he was sober.

"You're the first thing that has showed a spark of feelin' for me in seven years and now I gotta let you go." The thin face took on a look of tenderness. "Good-by, boy, good-by. I most wish I was a vag, too. Then we'd vag it together till the end. Good old vag pup!"

HE TURNED away and struck across Olive Street to the west side and started to climb the hill. The dog watched until he had gone half a block, then started up the east walk. He trotted quickly and soon drew nearly opposite. Then he slowed and kept distance.

He saw the man turn in at the basement door of a large, brick and stone building, and trotted across to smell at the door jambs. Then he lay down on the one step which tempered the slope of the hill and rested his nose on a hindleg. Four hours later the thin man came out and the dog jumped nimbly back to clear the step. There was welcome and love shining in his eyes and his tail slowly waved.

"Why, you poor mutt!" said the man. "You've been campin' on this step and waitin' for me all afternoon, ain't you? I thought you'd gone on and was way across town by now. Did you want to see me again?"

"*Ow-w-w-er-rou!*" said the dog, deep in his throat, his eyes shining.

"That's all right, boy, but you don't know Morell. Now don't you do no trailin' this trip, for I'm goin' down to Morell's store and he'd bust you wide open if you came in there. Bust me, too, mebbe."

The janitor looked down the street, then back to the dog.

"Lie down here," he said with a wave of his hand. "Come on."

The dog dropped on the step obediently and watched his friend.

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"I'm just goin' to take a chance on you. If you're here when I get back, I'm goin' to keep you in spite of Morell."

The man turned away and went on his errand, which was to get supplies at the store of the apartment-house owner. He received them, with the usual grumbling, cursing criticism of his work, and came back. The vag dog still lay on the step, watching for the janitor's return. He rose and followed the man inside, after a polite invitation.

The building was what is known as Class C, with brick and stone walls, and wooden construction between. In the downhill corner of the front basement was the janitor's room where Ben Avery lived. A small hall separated the little room from the laundry and led back to the furnace-room. This was also on the downhill side, to avoid excavation, and had a studded and plastered wall on all but the southern side. Where the north wall ran, the natural slope of the hill had been cut down to leave a space between the dirt and the wooden wall. All the rest of the space below the building, outside the three rooms, was left as it had been formed, except for trenches for walls and piers.

The wooden walls of the furnace-room had been covered, as had the rear wall of the laundry and all ceilings, with metal lath and heavy plaster as a fire-proofing. All doors in these walls were metal over wood. One such door opened in the laundry wall, allowing access to the unexcavated portion of the basement.

This was the place where Ben Avery had lived for two years, hard and unlovely years. At thirty-six he had been an engineer on a Midwest road, reliable, respected and ambitious. He went out on sympathetic strike, was blacklisted, wandered from road to road, getting work here and there, only to be dropped as soon as identified. Then he drifted away from railroading, taking anything he could get to do, dropping a little lower with each job. Now, at forty-seven, he felt old, useless, ready for the scrap heap, a derelict in spirit.

In his room he shoved his trunk back till the outer door, thrown open, just lapped the corner. With the trunk kept out from the wall to allow the lid to open, it gave a square of about thirty inches. In this square he made a bed for the dog. Then he set about teaching him to fly for this hidden corner at a signal.

It took but a short time to teach him that a shrill, hissing whistle, from Ben's widely-separated front teeth, meant just one thing and that the need to hide. Once learned, the lesson was never forgotten and Ben could send his dog into that corner, like a brown flash, at any time, from any place. With the door back against the trunk, he went over the top and snuggled, silent and watchful, completely hidden. Here he would remain until Ben hailed him with the assurance that it was all right now and a clear coast.

From the first Ben had called the brown dog a vag, and soon he gave him the name formally. Day by day the love grew stronger between the two and a change began to steal over Ben. His eye lost its dullness, the stoop grew less in his shoulders. His face no longer looked hopeless and he went back to his old habit of looking any one squarely in the eye while addressing him. The dreadful loneliness was banished and his pent-up, well-nigh strangled affections were once more active.

He began taking books and magazines from the library and took an interest in concerts and shows. He took long walks with Vag at night and on Sunday afternoons and his cheeks began to fill out. Color had again crept into his cheeks and he whistled as he walked with Vag. He even got into an argument over preparedness with some park loafers one day. He hardly realized the change, but he woke to the fact that he had changed one Sunday in the hills of Edendale.

He had walked the three miles from Morell's to the hills and had let Vag roam at will. Now they were passing a cottage where two men sat on the front porch and smoked. A cross-bred bull terrier lay in the grass. He lifted his head as Vag trotted past ahead of Ben. Then he started for the street on a crouching run.

Ben saw the terrier start and looked at the men. They, too, had seen the movement, but they did not call the terrier back. Instead, one man nudged the other and both stood up to watch their dog hash the hide off Vag. Ben quickened his pace and called to his dog. Vag made his usual quick turn at the call and looked back. The terrier leaped the low fence and came on. Vag looked at him and a certain tenseness took hold of his figure. He waited silently.

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The terrier leaped for the brown dog's neck and Vag ducked as he turned, catching one foreleg with a quick snap. The terrier struck the road on his side and came to his feet like the bounce of a ball. He charged, and Vag met him shoulder to shoulder. There was a quick exchange and they fell apart, the terrier showing a split ear and Vag with blood on his neck. Again they came together and the terrier mounted Vag's shoulder, striving to get him by the neck.

With a quick shake and plunge Vag cleared himself and now he drove in to the attack. He came low and snapped once, twice, cutting both forelegs, then his long jaws threw upwards and gripped the lower jaw of the terrier. His grip was perfect, the long canine teeth setting through the skin and flesh, to grind on the jawbone. Two hard shakes he gave to the head of his foe and the second brought a yell.

THE men on the porch leaped the railing, ran across the lawn and jumped the fence into the road. They both advanced on the brown dog, who now had his opponent on his back and was slowly shifting to the throat. One man drew back a heavy foot for a kick in the ribs. He paused as he saw Ben step between him and Vag, a heavy orangewood cane gripped for use.

"Call off your dog," said the man, furiously. "He's killing ours."

"I can't seem to recall hearin' you call your dog none," said Ben with quiet insolence. "He came after somethin' he wanted and he's gittin' it right now. I saw you chaps stand up and grin when he lit out for the road, too. Now it's my time to grin and I'm doin' it."

"We knock under, mister," said the other man quickly. "Stop your dog and we'll apologize. It'll be too late mighty soon."

Ben set his left hand on the head of Vag and spoke softly.

"That'll do, boy. Let him up."

The brown dog opened his jaws and leaped back from the humiliated terrier. Whimpering, the brindle cross-breed shook his aching head and ran for the cottage. The men watched him go and then turned to Ben.

"Some dog!" said the one who had apologized. "Sell him? I'll bid twenty for him right now."

"Why don't you talk to some man about buyin' his woman or the kids?" remarked Ben, truculently. "There ain't money enough in the First National to buy my dog. Come on, Vag. Let's be movin' along."

Ben walked home in a state of exhilaration. He had a dog who could fight. That was worth almost as much as being able to fight himself. He stopped short, at the thought. Why, he had faced those two back there without a tremor. He had not felt the slightest hesitation or fear of consequences. How long was it since he had last felt enough independence to face anybody down? Something queer had certainly got hold of him. He pondered long on the why of this and found no answer.

He had never been a brawler, but he was respected as a man who had early learned to back his own opinions and did not allow insults to pass unnoticed. Now he winced as he thought of the abuse Morell had showered on his cringing head for two years. Well, if having found that his nerve had come back to that extent, he ever again allowed Morell to curse him unrebuked he deserved all he got.

Five months had gone past without Morell having found out that he had a dog in his basement. Once, when the owner had popped in from the street unexpectedly, the laundress, who loved Vag almost as much as Ben did, had turned her largest basket upside down over the dog and dropped a sheet over it. But the time was at hand when Morell would learn of the presence of Vag in whirlwind fashion.

Morell had made many enemies during the years he had lived in the city and some had long memories. One in particular, known at Folsom as No. 3756, had taken his long vacation behind bars because of the hatred he felt for Morell. He had tried to get even, overstepped the law, and Morell gloated over sending him up for it. He served his time and came back more intent than ever on getting even.

In the middle of a warm night, Vag woke to hear a strange sound in the laundry. Ben had left the windows open and set the doors ajar that the breeze might draw through. Vag left his bed, double-curved his way past the door and padded across to the laundry. He stopped just inside the door, between two big baskets, and sniffed. He caught a strange odor and his ears told

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him that some one was tampering with the screen outside a window. Presently a dark figure slipped inside and stood in one of the laundry tubs. A round spot of light traveled swiftly about the room at the height of a man's breast.

When the round spot disappeared Vag turned and trotted softly back to the room where Ben lay asleep. He stood on his hindlegs and pawed at Ben. Then he nuzzled at his shoulder and licked his face. Ben woke with a start, but even as he opened his mouth to speak he heard a squeak and paused. He knew that squeak. It came from the little fire-door in the back-wall of the laundry. He had noticed it yesterday and intended to oil the hinges.

When Vag left the laundry the intruder was getting down to floor level and heard nothing till the dog struck the wooden floor of the janitor's room. Then he heard two soft thumps of padding feet. He sent the spot of light around the room twice, at the former level and close to the floor, but nothing living appeared. He went on his way convinced that he had been mistaken.

When Ben heard the tell-tale hinges he whispered a quieting word to Vag and slid out of bed. He put his feet in his limpsoled slippers, picked up his only weapon, the orangewood cane, and started for the unfinished basement. He heard nothing more, but he found the door wide open and walked through it. Vag kept close at his heels.

Ben had walked more than half-way back to the corner of the wall behind the furnace-room when he saw a flicker of light ahead. Then it grew stronger rapidly and danced like an open flame. He realized that the fire was behind the furnace-room and what he saw was only the shine of flames, leaping on the rows of posts. He heard footsteps hurrying toward him and lifted the cane for a blow. A black figure came around the corner and he struck with all his force. A jarring tingle ran through his hand and arm, his cane slipped from his fingers and fell at his side. A flash of red fire and a crashing explosion came to him like the echo of his blow. He felt a jerk on the left side of his pajama coat.

The slope of the hillside had carried him up until the joists above barely cleared his head. In his concentration on the danger ahead, he had forgotten that, and his blow had landed on a joist. Before he had time to move the intruder had fired a revolver of heavy caliber at him from arm's length. The fellow essayed a second shot, but just as his finger squeezed the trigger, Vag shot up from beside his master and his long jaws closed around the gunman's wrist.

The shot roared out, but the bullet, deflected by the force of Vag's onslaught, went smashing through the wall. Then the hand dropped loosely open, shorn of its power by the long, sharp teeth that bit through muscle and tendon and gouged the bones beneath, and the gun fell.

One quick glance, that showed, in the flickering light, that Vag was holding tenaciously, and Ben ran on toward the corner. Two strides and he turned to the left. Vag and the fire-bug were left to fight alone, thrashing about, slipping, grunting in the semi-darkness that soon became total. Sticking to the wrist he had seized, Vag gritted his teeth down into the bone and wrestled with his captive.

DESPERATELY the criminal raked the dirt with his left hand, searching for the lost gun. His foot, thrown out to brace himself, had sent it dropping down the cut bank. The agony of the hold upon his wrist was fast becoming unbearable and he pulled in on it till he could get his left hand at work on the dog. Hurriedly he felt for an eye and gouged. The terrible teeth slipped from their hold and he whirled for a dash. Above, the feet of rudely-awakened men were pounding, on their way to the basement.

Ben came back around the corner in time to see the figure of the strange man darken the little door. With a shout to Vag, he ran as well as the darkness would allow, just ahead of him the flying figure of Vag. He came out into the laundry-room as the intruder leaped to the laundry tub below the open window. Some one coming down the basement stairs snapped on a switch and the flash of electricity lighted the scene. The man ducked his head to leap out to the deep area. In the hall sounded rushing feet. Across the floor streaked a brown dog and his leap carried him high.

As Vag leaped Morell burst into the room, back of him a motley gang of pajamaed tenants. He saw the dog and let out a roar as he sprang forward. The sharp teeth snapped in the collar of the fugitive, the dog skidded across the shoulders, and dog and man went to the floor beyond the

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between Harald and Gunnhild. Hour after hour they talked and planned of a greater Norway. The king was amazed at the girl's foresight and found her counsel invaluable. Continually did she urge him to build a great fleet of ships; extend his borders; put down the lawlessness in the land and give wise government.

Finally one day the young monarch exclaimed:

"With you to aid me, there is nothing I can not do. You shall be my wife, my queen, and together we shall rule over a strong and happy people."

"Harald," she answered, "if you would win me, go forth and take into your hand not this and that poor district, but *all Norway*. Then return and I will be your wife."

"Tomorrow I will leave this house and not return until I am king of all Norway," he vowed. "Until that time comes I will touch neither razor to my cheeks nor shears to my hair, in memory of my vow."

Harald's plan was to march far north and conquer Thrandheim, the most hostile section in Norway. Such petty rulers on the way as offered resistance would first be subdued and then invited to fight under his banner. Once loyal, they would be permitted to remain masters of their own small realms.

In the meantime, the berserk Haki was in hiding, recovering from wounds and tenderly cared for by Flora, sister of Gipull of Sparabu. This young girl had been stolen by the berserk, a wrong he had often promised to right by marrying her. She was living in the hope of this. Now she advised him to go to his hiding-place in Borghus, just over the Swedish border, while she traveled to Westfold to learn of Harald's plans.

"Once I am your wife," she continued, "I can persuade my brother to lend us men, gold and influence. Then you shall use the men of Thrandheim to make you king of all Norway."

"And you shall be my queen," he cried. But he chuckled to himself: "A king may have more than one wife, little schemer, and the other shall be Gunnhild."

So it came about that weeks later Flora stumbled into Haki's refuge with news of Harald's plans.

With the first warm days of Spring, Harald and his host marched north. The wild clans of Orkdale were the first to challenge the invasion. But they were no match for Harald's well-disciplined army. After a bloody battle, Gryting, the Orkdale king, called for mercy and threw in his lot with the young conqueror.

"Word of your coming has gone even to Thrandheim," explained the defeated king to Harald. "Haki the berserk sent word."

The young king's army, now reenforced by three hundred Orkdalners under command of Gryting, set out for Thrandheim.

One day they sighted a host of dragon ships making for land. Strangely enough, the commander made a peace sign instead of giving battle. Then he approached Harald and explained:

"I am Hakon Grjotgardsson, Earl of Yrjar in Thrandheim. I wish to make peace and put my ships at your disposal."

Harald accepted his offer and went on—

"When I have won all Thrandheim, you shall be Earl of Strind and Stjoradale as well as Yrjar."

Days later the army halted between two mighty cliffs, the gateway to the hilly kingdom of Gaulardale and the outpost of the eight Thrandheim realms. The Gaular men had worked to make this point a trap. But so cunning was Harald in approaching it, that the Gaular men themselves became the trapped. Soon the pass was running red with their blood. At length Harald, unable to bear the sight of further slaughter, cried out:

"Enough. This is not war but murder."

CHAPTER XII

THE OLD LAW PASSES

OUT OF the black belly of a cavernous gorge the army thrust its head. They had met no further resistance in Gaulardale, and had found Strind utterly abandoned. The river which once flowed over their road had cut a smooth, hollow way in the rocky declivity below, and then had vanished from the sight of man, leaving a practicable path down to the terraced top of a lesser hill. This terraced height commanded a distant view of the great plateau of Upper Stjoradale.

"There they are!"

Harald pointed far down and away into the mountain-girdled plateau, from whose broad surface rose an impalpable night-fog, shot through with the lurid, blended redness of a multitude of cooking-fires.

Hakon plucked at his white beard.

"It is hard to guess at numbers through this fog," he hazarded, "but by the breadth of yonder glow, it must be the greatest host that has ever been gathered in Thrandheim. Tomorrow will give you a chance to test the gods' love for you, Harald."

"Shall we hasten on, and attack them as they sit about the fires?"

"Not unless you yearn to taste the ale of Odin. The Gaular-folk have reached them, remember, and they are only waiting for your appearance. They will have watchers at this end of the valley."

Harald shrugged his shoulders.

"I will not go back," he declared. "I came to take this land, and take it I will. We must be getting away from here, for we show up too well against this cliff, and there is only one place to go to. It is forward or nothing."

"That is true enough. What is your opinion, Guthorm?"

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The old war-duke pointed down to the terraced hill.

"There is earth there," he said, "and we can entrench. The bare rock here is no good to us. Moreover, that black patch at the bottom of the hill looks like trees, which will screen us from their sight while we dig in. By morning, we shall be snug in our holes, like badgers; and it takes good dogs to dig the badger out."

"That is good counsel," Hakon answered. "You will do well to take it, Harald."

Harald nodded.

"You are wiser at this game than I. Let us be going."

Softly, with infinite care, the army stole down the path of the ancient river to the grassy hill below. When they reached its second terrace, their leaders halted them, and summoned the chiefs together. Each one received his instructions. The enemy lay still a good three miles away, but the work must proceed softly none the less. Each chief divided his company into shifts, and the first shift set to work marking out the trenches and turning up the sod with their spears.

Every two hours one shift came off and another went on. By three hours after midnight, three parallel lines of ramparts and ditches girdled the hill at intervals of thirty feet, the fringe of masking trees had been carefully thinned, and their trimmed and sharpened boughs thrust point up into pits well in front of the first ditch. The leafy fronds were then spread above the pits, and turf replaced above them.

The wings of each earthwork curved out like the horns of a bull; and in these horn-like extremities the archers were posted, especially in the front line. In redoubts close behind the archers' positions, spearmen were placed in support. The center of each line was held by heavy-armed swordsmen and axmen. Silent and anxious, the little army hugged their new-built shelter and waited for the dawn.

It came at last, and the morning wind brought to their ears a multitude of faint sounds from the hostile camp.

"It will not be long now," muttered Hakon. "They will smell us out."

Breakfastless and empty, the host peered through the screen of trees. At last came an almost inaudible jingle of mail, and then a loud shout. The enemy's outposts had discovered the thinning of the grove. Boldly they came on to its very edge, which was still well out of arrow-shot, and saw the surprise which the night had prepared for them.

They shouted mockingly at the entrenched host, so contemptibly small, and darted back to their own forces. In a short time, the mountain-walls flung back the echoes of a mighty, many-throated roar, followed by a confused, distance-softened tumult. But nearly an hour more passed, and nothing happened.

"May the Norns blast them," grumbled Hakon. "They are making us wait till they have eaten!"

But all things end. At last came a prodigious clanking of mail and clattering of shields, drowning the fainter shouts of the captains to their companies; and then the ominous, measured tramp of armed men shook the ground.

"Gods!" cried Hakon. "What a host!"

Harald groaned.

"What a fool I was!" he reproached himself. "A few archers in that clump of trees would have held them half an hour!"

"That it would not," Guthorm assured him. "It was the trees or the slope. We could not have both, and the slope is better."

Around and through the grove came streams of mail-clad men, as water pours through the seams of a ship. Once past, they re-formed in ranks that stretched from one edge of the slope to the other, company by company. On they strode, till eight distinct armies, each in two or three ranks, covered the lower terraces of the hill. At the head of each army floated a gorgeous banner, blazoned with savage devices.

"Tonight we sup with the gods!" Hakon commented grimly. "Not four, but all eight kings of Thrandheim are here. Yes, and by Thor! I see Rognvald of the Meres among them, and Solvi Klofi. Where Solvi walks, death follows."

"Loose at sixty paces!" Harald shouted to the archers; and the master-bowmen passed the order down and back.

"At forty feet, draw swords, rise all, and charge!"

Hopeless to charge such a host; but better so than to wait too long, and die like rats in the earthworks. Surely this was the last battle, and the end of the great adventure.

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In savage silence the bowmen waited, till the foremost rank of foes crossed a line marked with peeled stakes; then: "Loose!" cried the leaders, and the air was torn with a vibrant, many-stringed twang. A flood of arrows drove straight into the advancing companies; and more than a hundred men dropped in their tracks. Without rest or mercy the bow-strings rained in their pitiless storm, and the path of that inexorable advance was rent with death and strewn with corpses.

But on and on it came, rolling over its own slain, till barely eighty feet away. There, a terrible volley stopped it where it stood; it reeled, fell back, and melted before the iron blast. The seond rank took its place, engulfing its survivors; and the march came steadily on.

Ah, the endlessness of it. Men fell in multitudes; and ever more multitudes took their places, swarming on and on. The second rank was nearly spent, and the third now led. Twenty yards, and the defenders were nearly out of arrows. A sharp command rang from the midst of the attackers; and with a fierce cry, the ranks gathered momentum, and swept on at the double, gaining speed at every stride. A withering volley, another, and then the men of Westfold leaped over their ramparts, to charge into the face of death.

BUT before they could rush, "Stand!" rang Harald's voice; and the well-drilled warriors stopped on the edge of their trenches. Stopped, and stared; for something unbelievable, miraculous, had happened. The fatal advance had halted, the attacking host was milling about in disorder. Cries of fear and pain arose, and the vast army writhed like a tortured serpent.

Then from right flank and rear, a ripple of flashing steel played along the ranks; line on line of swordsmen swung around the right, and flung himself like a wolf-pack, straight at its own flank. In the rear, too, the miracle was repeated; and, torn by the sudden tooth of treachery, the mighty Thrandheim host twisted in helpless pain. And now the rebellious lines swung free, and the thing was clear. Hundreds and hundreds of helmeted, skin-clad peasants, pressed into involuntary service, fleshed their hate on their hereditary oppressors in their hour of need.

The stricken army strove frantically to disentangle itself, to swing its ranks about to meet this swift peril; and ever as it strove its lines pressed closer and closer together. The two foremost ranks, caught between those behind and the ravening peasants on their flank, wrenched forward, then back, and brought up in a weltering mass.

"Now!" roared Harald. "Charge, and strike deep!"

With level spears, with flashing swords and axes, the glad companies of Westfold and Yrjar drove full into the tortured foe. Hampered as they were, and harried by the relentless peasant steel, the foremost Thrandheim ranks were cut down like sheep. Here and there a stalwart chief flung himself into the gaps, swinging his weapon like a bloody flail; but it availed little. Harald, charging in the forefront, leaped straight for a tall standard that swayed above the doomed first rank.

His point drove through the throat of the banner-man, and his left hand seized the pole. But before he could disengage, a broad knife shattered against the rings of his mail, and a huge body thudded into him. He dropped the banner-staff and faced his enemy. A savage young face glared into his; a powerful hand twisted its fingers 'round his throat. Harald drove his fist straight into the flushed face and the man reeled; but still the fingers held their choking grip. Again he struck, and blood spurted from his adversary's face; but the grip held. Harald felt his face grow hot and his breath flicker in his throat.

He wrenched against the grip, and cast his strong arms about the Thrandheimer. A moment they struggled; then Harald's knee rose swiftly, and impacted against a mail-covered stomach. The man grunted, and the strangling fingers loosed their hold. The next instant, Harald caught him 'round the waist and strove to throw him, while the battle roared and surged about them. He could hardly see; there was a mighty humming in his ears, and ever and again struggling warriors would beat against them.

The man had recovered now, and wrestled with Harald fiercely. Body to body they strove; now one way, now the other. Harald unclasped his right arm and felt for his knife; but no sooner was his hold relaxed than the other threw his whole weight upon him, and threw him to the ground.

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With a quick twist, the king pulled himself free, and struck furiously at the Thrandheimer's bloody mouth.

Spitting blood and teeth, the foeman flung out a snake-like arm; and again the sinewy fingers found Harald's throat. Slowly, savagely, they pressed into the flesh, shutting off the breath. Harald rained in blow on blow, but the clutching fingers never weakened. Purple spots danced before his eyes, sharp pains stabbed his lungs, and then . . . .

A wrenching pain, darkness, and a sudden flood of light. His eyes cleared, and he found himself on one knee, watching a man with a bloody face struggling in the embrace of a gigantic peasant. The countryman towered a full foot above his adversary; his shoulders were titanic, his chest, wrapped in the skin of a black bear, was like a rampart. His huge head was crowned with the mask of the pelt, and loomed godlike under the beast's yellow fangs.

Overmatched as he was, the Thrandheimer fought like a demon. Once his teeth met in the skin of the peasant's hand, and but for the impact of its mate against his cheek, would have torn away the flesh. Again the fist descended; and the bloody face winced, the head fell limply back. The peasant relaxed his grip; and with the swiftness of light, the Thrandheimer tore from his arms, and fled into the reeking welter of battle.

"Fiend's brat! He is gone!" the rueful countryman exclaimed. Then, turning to the king, "You are Harald of Westfold? You must be; there are no two heads of hair in the country like yours. You fought well, too, but he would have bested you. That man is a demon. It is Solvi Klofi, the butcher of North Mere. He has murdered hundreds of men, and slain more than I can tell. I am glad I was by to help you!"

Harald rose, took a deep breath, and looked over the reeking hill. The peasant companies had torn their way between two of the Thrandheim lines, and were slaying with the fury of beasts; his own men and Hakon's had wiped out two ranks. The remnant had managed to bunch together, almost surrounded, and were defending themselves with desperation.

"I am glad, too," said Harald; "but we will speak of that after the battle. Now let us to work."

"So be it," the peasant answered, snatched up his ax from the ground, and threw himself into the fight.

Harald watched him a moment, noting the tremendous descent of his massive weapon, and the play of his great shoulder-muscles. Then, as he reached for his own sword, he saw on the ground the torn and blood-stained banner for which he had nearly lost his life. It was singular how little he cared for it now.

Almost apathetically he picked it up; then, as he thought of the cruel face of the man whom he had fought for it, hatred rushed in upon him. He had never hated a foe before, except those who had murdered his father; but he hated this man with a bitter, instinctive hatred. He swung the banner high, clutched the hilt of his sword, and rushed into the struggling ranks.

It was still hot work. Beaten as they were, the Thrandheimers fought for their lives with all the desperate courage for which they were famous. It was mid-afternoon before Harald's men and the peasants succeeded in hemming them in completely; and it was two hours more, two bitter, cruel hours, before they were ready to listen to Harald's repeated demands for surrender.

Whenever their weary arms struck too feebly, the fierce, bloodstained face and flashing sword of Solvi would erupt from the front rank and on the very points of the attackers; the exhausted men would gain fresh courage, and the merciless fight would be renewed. As often as Solvi leaped forth, Harald sprang to meet him; but the press of his own men held him back. Ever and again, Solvi's eyes and his would meet, and a gleam of inextinguishable hatred would flash between them.

Toward the end of the day, there came a lull in the fighting; and Harald, determined to end it, cried aloud:

"Men of Thrandheim, ye have fought well. There is nothing lovely in death. Now, for the last time, I bid you throw down your arms and receive life. If ye refuse, not one of you will I spare!"

Doubt wavered in the dogged features of the Thrandheimers. Solvi Klofi saw; saw, too, that his enemies, sure that it was over now, were lowering their points. With a wild roar, he flung himself straight at the thinnest of the surrounding line, striking furiously to right and left. In a moment,

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the Thrandheimers were reanimated. As one man, they launched themselves after him, and their combined weight forced him through the line.

STRUGGLING like madmen, they tore through after him. Some fell, but most won free before their foes could recover from their surprise; and the battered remants of the beaten army ran for their lives down the blood-stained, trampled hill, and onto the plateau.

The conquerors streamed after them in hot pursuit; but they were as weary as their quarry and without their thirst for life; moreover, hunger dragged at their heels. Arrows and throwing-spears were spent, and it was fleet foot and sword. Across the valley the gasping companies poured, over and through the litter of the Thrandheim camp, and into the hills beyond. Ever the desperate fugitives gained; and at last found safety in the woods of the further hills.

It was late that night before the last of the pursuers returned. Not all that had shared the chase came back; for some, ignorant of the rough, unfriendly mountain-country, had been ambushed by little bands of the hillmen that had turned back to do what lurking evil they could. But when the moon rose, all that remained alive had answered the repeated summons of their leaders' horns, and were gathered in the camp that had so recently sheltered their enemies.

The king bade his chiefs detail search-parties to bring in the wounded, and ordered others to slaughter enough of the captured cattle for the army's food. This was soon done; for hundreds of sheep and cattle were penned into a gulch at one end of the valley with long beams placed between rocks. Fires were lighted; great gobbets of meat were cut from the steaming sides of the slaughtered animals and passed, still warm, to the company's cooks; and the host had its first meal in four-and-twenty hours.

Harald strolled from fire to fire, talking and laughing with the little knots of merry-makers, offering kindly sympathy to those who had lost kinsmen or friends in the battle, and praising all for the courage they had shown.

"That is a good king," a peasant remarked thoughtfully to the man beside him, a sturdy house-carle of Harald's guard.

"You may well say so. Since he came into his own, we have seen plenty of fighting, and a bellyful of bitter blows; but he has fed and clothed us as well as himself, has let us rest when we were weary, and has always had a good word for us. You saw him at work today, and there is no need to tell you that he fights as well as any."

"No need. If our kings had been like him, you had received no help from us today. They were worse than so many trolls. Always seizing our cattle, burning our crops, carrying off our women, and beating us when we resisted. Well, the gods be thanked, every one of them lies out on that hill, staring at the moon with eyes that see not. I found the corpse of him that ruled over our people, and ground my heel into his face. Would there had been enough life in him to feel it!"

Still at his rounds, Harald came toward a group of men that sat quietly about a fire, their backs outlined bulkily against the glow. One of those backs, broader and bulkier than the rest, was that of a veritable giant. Approaching nearer, the king observed the vastness of the man, and noted the thick bearskin which wrapped him. He touched him on the shoulder, and the peasant faced about with amazing agility.

"I have found you at last, friend," Harald greeted him. "It was a good turn you did me today; I think I have to thank you for my life. Your share of the spoil will be a great one."

Without rising, or showing the least embarrassment, the man moved aside, made place for the king beside him, and observed:

"The night air is cool; you had best sit down, Harald. Never mind my share of the booty. I have no use for it. As for the good turn, it is nothing beside that you have done us."

"How is that? I know of nothing I have done for you."

"If you had not brought war against those evil kings of ours, do you think we should ever have found the courage, or the chance, to rise against them? Whether you meant to do so or not, you have set us free."

"That is one way to look at it. What is your name, friend?"

"Kolbeinn, son of Asgaut the Strong. Men call me the Bear."

"It is a good name; and if your father

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was strong, you are no weakling. You handled Solvi as if he had been a child; and he was a sufficiently powerful man, as my ribs and throat attest."

"Too powerful, and too cunning. It was a bad business, his escape. He hates you now, and will make trouble for you. But I will stay with you if you will have me, and he will not harm you while I live."

Somehow it did not seem so ludicrous to Harald, this offer of protection from a peasant to a king. The man looked so overpowering, so thoroughly capable of protecting anything.

"Stay with me by all means, if you wish. But have you no kinsfolk who have a greater claim on you? No family?"

The man's face grew terrible.

"I had once," he answered. "It was in Sparabu, where I was born. Gipull, who was king over us, knows how they died. I met Gipull today, toward the midst of the fighting. There is not enough of him left to feed a hungry raven."

Harald pondered a moment. "Whither is the Thrandheim host likeliest to flee? Will they scatter through the country, or will they try to reach the fjord and take ship?"

"They will run for Inner-Isle in Sparabu, where the kings of the North Districts left their ships. Solvi brought his sea-rovers thither from North Mere, and there will be galleys enough and to spare, now that so few men are left alive. The odds are they will sail for the mouth of the fjord and the open sea. There is no hope of their ever regaining their lands, and their best chance is to turn viking."

The king thought swiftly.

"Then, if I send you and your fellows after them, there is still hope of your overtaking them, for they are weary. Have you plenty of arrows?"

Kolbeinn rose, and his bulk loomed portentously in the shadow.

"Not plenty, but enough at a pinch. We will go after them, and report to you at Ladir. I know the mountains, and there are paths that will take us to Inner-Isle ahead of the host. You, Bersi, collect the lads from Skaum and Verdale. There should be near fourteen of us, and that will be more than enough. Farewell, Harald."

Before the king knew how he went, he melted into the furze. So swiftly as to seem uncanny, men rose from every group, collected in bands, and took their orders from others, who seemed to have authority. In an incredibly short space there was not a peasant left in the camp.

AT NOON the next day, Harald ordered the host to break camp. Each man took enough meat for a day; the moutain streams would furnish water till they should come within sight of Ladir, twenty miles away on the shores of the fjord. They began their march, having buried their dead, but leaving the bodies of the hostile slain to feed the ravens. That night they entered the deserted courts of Ladir, where the evil king of Strind had ruled till death overtook him.

He had been a mighty king; his empty hall was a glorious structure, made of great oaken timbers, with gables carved into the likenesses of horrible, rampant monsters, which seemed hideously alive under the moon. About it clustered the offices, and the dwellings of his favored warriors. Shipyards extended from the rear of the garth to the water's edge, and in them were the half-finished hulls of four long galleys. But everything was silent and deserted; no human thing stirred in the court, no voices whispered in the abandoned halls.

"Where are the women, the children, and the old carles?" Hakon asked in wonder.

It was uncanny, this utter melting away of all the inhabitants of a palace.

The answer was soon supplied. One of Harald's house-carles spied a foot sticking out from under a pile of bones behind the kitchens, and seizing the foot, pulled lustily. A querulous whining, half-smothered, made itself heard in the heart of the pile. In a little, however, the bones flew to right and left; and a stifled filthy wretch was dragged out. He gibbered and trembled for a time; then stole a furtive glance at his disturber, and dropped to his knees with a scream.

"Get up, fool! I will not hurt you!"

And to prove this statement, the warrior kicked him lustily twice or thrice. This brought the fellow to his feet.

"Well, speak, you knave! Where are all the folk?"

Another kick emphasized the need for an answer. The man pointed to the west.

"Gone? Where? Why?"

He found his voice at last, and spoke in a weak, frightened gasp.

"One came from the fight, and bade them

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flee. They have run away to North Mere. I was sick——"

"If you had said you were sick, instead of holding your stupid tongue, I should have kicked you more gently," the house-carle reproached him. "Come, tell your tale to the king, after which I will give you food."

And picking the feeble thing up like a sack, he bore it off to Harald.

"Gods! but these Thrandheimers love their liberty, such as it is," Harald exclaimed. "But who would have thought they would prefer exile for the sake of a bad king to prosperity under a kindly one? Well, since they are not here, we shall not have to feed them. Bustle about now, lads, and make ready something to eat. We may have our hands full tomorrow. Break up the tables and make extra benches in the great hall and all of the guest-rooms; we can eat off the bare planks of the floor.

"Thorhall, you have the first watch; you will be relieved by Gudrod two hours after midnight. The peasants will not be here for a day and a half at least, nor will the ships Hakon left on guard at the mouth of the fjord. If the Thrandheimers got away from Kolbeinn, the galleys of Yrjar should stop them. But it is well to be watchful. If sail or host appears, send a man to the hall to wake me."

Age needs less sleep than youth; and Harald was no veteran campaigner. He threw himself down on an empty bench, and slept the sleep of the exhausted, being shaken by his experience with Solvi. When he woke, it was broad day. The room, save for himself, was empty. He sprang to his feet and went into the court. There, on guard as they had always been outside his chamber at Tunsberg, stood his house-carles, faithful to their trust.

"No news?" he questioned the captain.

"No news. All is dull as a Winter's night."

TWO days dragged by. As far as the eye could reach, the blue fjord was empty and sailless, save for the dingy little fishing-boats that drifted down from its back reaches, where the war was still a distant thing. Nor did any sign of friend or foe appear over the southern hills. The host chafed at inaction; but Harald went about busy and contented. He rambled about the heights with a handful of house-carles, inspected the ship-yards, rowed out on to the harbor and made soundings; and at times he prowled about the empty rooms of the royal dwelling.

"It is strange," he told Hakon, "that we have found no sign of treasure here. The king of Ladir must have enormous wealth somewhere about, for this is a great dwelling, and required many warriors to guard it. We have searched everywhere, but have found nothing. The women and old folk had no time to take it away with them."

Hakon thought a while.

"It is plain," he reflected, "that in sending their helpless away to North Mere, the Ladir folk did not expect to return. They were beaten too badly to think they should ever drive you out again. Yet I do not think they would have sunk the treasure in the fjord. Men give up hope of regaining their gold only when they give up hope of life. It will be in a place hard to get at, but not far from here. It must have been too great a burden to carry off quickly; and it can not have been buried deep, for that would have required too much time. There is a bog two miles southeast of the city. It may have been hidden there."

"Take fifty men with sacks," Harald answered. "There is plenty of sail-cloth in the warehouse yonder. You will need planks to lay down over the boggy ground. One-third of what you find is yours."

Hakon hastened off; and within the hour the search-party was on its way up a little river which wound back from the fjord to a blue lake. The king strolled down to the strand, to resume his watch for the sails of the blockading fleet.

The night passed, and Hakon did not return. This caused no anxiety; rather an eager expectation, a tremor of excitement, ran through the host; for the delay meant that he had found something worth staying for. The next morning, as Harald was eating in the great hall with his house-carles, a great shout went up from the warriors breakfasting in the court; and in a moment, Hakon himself ran in, carrying a fat and heavy sack of muddy cloth.

To the king's very feet he hasted, and poured forth upon the floor a gleaming, tumbling mass of golden necklets, arm-rings, finger-rings, bangles, and brooches. Man after man followed him with sacks bulging. The whole hoard was poured out

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on the planks. The warriors crowded in, gesticulating and laughing aloud, till the hall was packed. When they caught sight of the enormous treasure, their eyes fairly stood out, and their breath came short and fast.

Harald was outwardly calm, but his eyes glowed.

"Well, lads," he addressed the throng, "we will settle the possession of this strife-breeder now. Hakon and his Yrjart men, who have done so much for us, and who discovered the whole, get one-third; another third shall go to the peasants for saving our lives the other day, if they ever return to claim it. The remainder is yours. I will have no part nor parcel in it; the land is enough for me. We will apportion it tomorrow, after it has been reckoned up and appraised."

For a moment no man said anything, so overcome were they by his munificence. Then, as their minds comprehended it, they broke into cheer on cheer. They tossed their weapons to the rafters, and caught them as they came down; they clashed sword on shield, and shouted till the walls rang again.

In the midst of the tumult, a great head and a massive pair of shoulders loomed through the crowd; the dense array gave way before a mighty, thrusting body, and Kolbeinn the Bear broke through to where the king stood. Harald saw him, and raised his hand to order silence.

"Where is my watch?" he cried. "Where are those who should be my eyes and ears, when I am about my business? Thorhall, you dog, who gave you leave to quit your post?"

Thorhall, half-hidden in the throng, came forward, abashed, but sure of his ground.

"My King," he answered, "I saw his ships half an hour ago, but waited to give the alarm until I knew whether they brought friends or foes. It is ill disturbing a king at his meat. When they came close, and I made out this giant's child on the fore-deck of the foremost galley, I knew that you would fain know of it, and came to tell you. But I found you here devouring the first sack of this treasure with eager eyes, and waited till you should have seen your fill."

"Since you were at your post, and saw, I hold you excused," Harald replied, "and take back the name I gave you. Kolbeinn, tell us what you have done. How comes it that you return by sea?"

"This lad here had something to do with it," Kolbeinn announced, dragging forward a tall, blond youth with a bandaged face. At sight of him, Hakon ran forward, clasped the youth in his arms, and cried:

"Grjotgard! My son! You have met the enemy and conquered! Is it not so?"

The young man flushed.

"It is so, my father," he answered; "or rather, this big fellow pursued them, and drove them straight into the trap we had laid for them. They attacked us hotly, seeing no escape but to cut a way through us. We were hard pressed, for that troll's son of a Solvi led them. When we were almost overborne, Kolbeinn's galley came up with them, and we had them front and rear. We closed, and boarded them. To make it short, we swept their decks, killing. They fought to the last.

"All perished save one—Solvi. Him we captured, after he had slain many men. We put a rope about his neck and hung him to a spar; the rope broke, and he dropped into the sea. He sank like a stone; but after a while he came up, without the rope, and swimming. Our archers loosed on him, but the sun on the water spoiled our aim. It was just off Agdaness, and he made the land before we could overhaul him, for the rowers had not returned to their benches after the fight."

"That robs you of half the praise, my son," Hakon reproved him. "You should have tied his hands and feet before you hung him up. He has more lives than Loki. My mind misgives me concerning this man. He will have blood of us for putting him to the shame of the rope."

"Let the lad be, Hakon," the king commanded. "He has fought well, and deserves praise. My armorer shall make you a gold-washed birnie, Grjotgard. But let us hear what Kolbeinn has to say. How came you by ships, Bear? When you left us, you were traveling on your feet."

"IT WAS this way, Harald. We gave chase, as you know, by more direct ways than those the Thrandheimers had taken. I must tell you that for the last three years I have been an outlaw, for the hell-dog Gipull feared me, and took that means of getting rid of me. But

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the peasants thought well of me, and would not betray me. Nor did any man dare to hunt me out. I lived in the mountains, and learned all the mountain ways. I led my host by these ways.

"We came up with the fugitives just as they reached Inner-Isle, where their ships were drawn up. Out came our arrows. They made for the galleys, and we sent the gray-goose after them. The arrow-flight held them off from the nearest of the ships; but they got to those that were out of range, shoved them off, and made good their escape. Some of my fellows are fishermen, and understand ships, so we took those the Thrandheimers had left behind, and pursued them.

"But they were trained sailors, whereas but few of my men could use the oars; and as the wind was against us, they hauled away. We kept on, however; and when we could smell the open sea, we saw them but a little way ahead, engaged with the fleet of this lad here. So we had them at last, and fleshed our hate on them again. Some day I shall meet with Solvi, and close the whole account."

"It was well done, and bravely," Harald commented. "And now, Kolbeinn, I have something to say to you which concerns all your people as well. First, you see this gold. The third of it goes to them. I hope you will change your mind, and take your share of it. In the second place, I take it that the greatest good that your people could receive is assurance of freedom from injustice and rapine. Is it so?"

"It is what they long for above all things. We are a peaceful folk when we are let alone, and we wish nothing better than to remain so."

"Then you shall. From this time on, the law which has prevailed in this land is done away with, and a new law is established. You are every one of you my men, and your land is my land. You shall hold that land of me, so long as you live, and it shall descend to your children after you. I will protect you in your possession of it. If any wrongs you, or takes so much as a grain of wheat from your store, I will avenge you. There must be no private vengeance.

"The law which my father made for Westfold shall be compared with that of each district, and new codes drawn up. In accordance with these, wrong-doers shall be judged, and he who wrongs another shall be punished under my laws. Murder, robbery, and wrong to a woman—be she the humblest in the land—shall be bitterly atoned for. Peace and prosperity shall be yours. You shall have the fruit of your labor.

"But to accomplish this, I must be strong. I need warriors. When war arises, or revolt raises its head, you must furnish me with money and men to defend myself and you. You shall choose from among yourselves chiefs of hundreds to administer the law and to lead you in battle. Each chief furnishes me with one hundred men. I will appoint an earl over every four or more chiefs; and one-third of the tax-money goes to maintain these earls and the warriors with whom the chiefs supply them in my name. The taxes will not be burdensome. Does this satisfy you?"

The sturdy peasant strode forward and grasped the king's hand in a bone-crushing clasp.

"Does it satisfy us?" he roared. "Does it satisfy the dying to receive life, the blind to receive sight? Now we shall live indeed, enjoying the labor we do, since we know we shall taste its fruits. We will do whatever you bid us, and we will follow you to the death!"

"It is well; and the opportunity may come soon. It is past Midsummer now; I remain here, building a great fleet, during the harvest-season and the Winter. In the Spring I shall sail south, to win all Western Norway, and to take back my own land of Westfold, which I fear Gandalf is making merry with. But henceforth the seat of my realm shall be here in Ladir; for I have examined it well, and found it most favorable for government in peace and war. When the time comes, Kolbeinn, I shall summon you to come south with me. Come hither, Hakon."

The old warrior came to the king's side; and Harald flung the strap of his own royal shield about his neck.

"You shall bear this shield of mine," he said, "in token that you are henceforth Earl of Strind and Stjoradale, even as I promised. You are my deputy in this Northern land; look that you rule it well. Be ever mindful of the weal of the peasants; for they are the bone and sinew of the realm, and on them I will build a new Norway."

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And the cheers of the people hailed the birth of the new day.

CHAPTER XIII

SOME WAYS OF LOVING

THE air grew chill, the days short, and the nights long and dark. The smell of snow was in the air, distant yet, but certain. Hornklofi came to Harald one evening, as the king sat alone by the fire.

"I do not like this bleak Northern air," he said. "Let me go south, Harald."

The king ran his eye over the lean, tough body, and smiled. "How long is it" he inquired, "since you put on padded breeches and hugged the hearth? Only last Winter you slept in the snow with me, bitten by the east wind, with no better covering than your cloak?

Hornklofi changed his tactics.

"I have business in the Dales," he urged. "It is pressing, and should have been attended to long ago."

"What business has a skald," Harald returned, "but to attend his king, to hold himself in readiness to sing whenever it is required of him?"

"The business of a wandering foot. You know, Harald, how the Western blood in me, drives me, how it wakes from months of idleness to bid me seek new lands, new faces, new deeds. Let me go, for I can make but ill songs here."

"Better ill songs than none at all, Hornklofi. How do you think I shall endure the dreary Winter, with no bard to raise my spirits with lays of brave deeds and daring ventures?"

"I have attended to that. Hakon has a skald who sings well enough, having plenty of native genius. He knows the ordinary tricks of the trade, too; and I have taught him a few of my best measures, so that you will hardly miss me for a while."

Harald frowned.

"I shall miss you as much as your songs, you mad Irishman. We have not been comrades for nothing. You would do better to stay with me. If any harm should come to you, it would be long before my heart grew light again."

"You shame me, Harald, and force me to speak the truth. Have you forgotten in the fighting of battles and the building of a nation, that there is a maid in Ringariki who has had no news of you for many months? For all she knows, the ravens may have stripped your bones on some mountain-meadow, where Heaven knows how many other good men lie."

For a long-space Harald sat thoughtful, while the other watched him with keen, half-humorous eyes. At length:

"Hornklofi, a poet is a man whom the gods have taught to read the hearts of others, to speak their thoughts before they themselves know the thoughts were there. It is strange how I, who love this maid, took no care of her anxiety for me; while you, who do not love her or any woman, knew both her feelings and those to which my own heart had hardly given shape."

"How do you know I love no woman?" the skald questioned him. "How do you know what is in my heart, since you are no poet, whatever I am?"

The eyes had lost their humor now, and were dark and unfathomable.

Harald looked up, gazed long and fixedly at him, with the light of dawning comprehension in his own eyes.

"Why, by the hand of my father!" he swore, "I believe the man loves her himself!"

The dark face never changed.

"It seems," Hornklofi said, "that when a poet reads the thoughts of others out of their hearts, he leaves his own thoughts there in exchange. It is true, Harald; I love Gunnhild as you do, and I think, no less."

A suggestion of shame clouded the king's face.

"I believe you love her more," he conceded, "though my heart tells me it is not possible for a man to love woman more. But you thought of her anxiety, of her grief, in the event of harm befalling me; you thought to go alone, through the gathering cold, from one end of Norway to the other, that her fears might be set at rest. While I thought of nothing but how I should hold my conquests, build fleets to extend those conquests, and win a mighty empire for her. My love made me proud; yours made you tender and thoughtful."

He fell to musing sadly, as one who feels that he has failed where he wishes most to succeed.

The skald, his own emotions strained and torn, hastened to comfort those of his friend.

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"You love her no whit less than I," he assured him, "and no less nobly. It is our different ways, that is all. The man of action fights and builds for his love; the poet reflects, dreams, sends out his thoughts —which have nothing better to do—to meet the thoughts of the beloved. But yours is the better love, if there is any better, for it creates splendid deeds. And now you know why I would go south, will you give me leave?"

"Willingly, though I shall count the days till your return. But will you not take an armed company with you? I do not like to think what may happen to one so well known to be my friend in a country where I have many ill-wishers."

"It is better that I go alone. I will change my fine gear for the coarse woolen garments of a peasant, put on a cloak with a hood to hide this swarthy face of mine, which would be known anywhere, and alter my features with a little bear's fat pricked under the skin.

"I shall say that I am a broken bard, dismissed in disgrace by my king, and forced to sing among country-folk for my meat. I will take a harp with me, too; for it is well-known that Hornklofi despises a harp. Any poor botcher who likes to call himself a poet can gloss over the unevenness of his verse with a few skilful turns on an instrument, and only a true skald dares to sing unaccompanied. The harp will give an appearance of truth to my seeming poverty."

"When do you start?"

"Within the hour. I have prepared a bag of food, a bottle of wine, and some ragged raiment. My sword, of course, goes with me under my cloak. There is a prophecy that I shall not die so long as I keep it by me. But you are sure, Harald, that you trust me on this errand?"

"Why do you doubt it? You have always been faithful; and why should I mistrust you now that I know your heart?"

Hornklofi smiled, but rather sadly.

"Your love is great indeed," he said, "since it leaves no room in your breast for jealousy. I will not fail you. Now give me your hand; and so, farewell."

The king grasped his hand with sincere affection, prayed the gods to go with him, and accompanied him to the door. The skald went to his quarters; and soon afterwards he emerged again, so ragged, so hag-gard-seeming, that Harald himself scarce recognized him. With a wave of his hand, Hornklofi turned away. When he had gone a few steps down the road, he struck a chord on the harp he carried, and sang softly and sadly to its music, sang a song so poignant and pregnant with grief, that the king, hearing, felt his cheeks grow wet.

THAT Autumn there appeared in the lonely shielings of the Upland mountaineers a tall, bent man who seemed poor and in want, though his skill with the harp should have secured him prosperous employment. There was something wrong about him, the peasants thought, for he would never remove the hood which covered his head and face, all but his great, dark eyes. When they invited him to eat, he parted the hood slightly over his mouth, and took his food rapidly, without exposing more than the lips.

He would answer no questions about himself, save to say that he had been a great man's bard, but had fallen from favor and been replaced by a younger man. Always he paid for his food and lodging with such singing as had never been heard before, and the honest folk thought his master a fool to part with such a voice. Always he rose before his hosts were up, and went his way; no man knew whence or whither.

His fame spread north and south; and when he came to the lowlands, he was welcomed warmly by whomever he chose to lodge with. As soon as he entered a man's door, the host would bid his servant feed him well, and would straightway excuse himself and leave the house, to return shortly with a company of friends. It was looked upon as an honor to be selected by this man as his entertainer.

It was even rumored that he was Bragi himself, the god of song, come down among men to show favor to the especially deserving; and whoever lent the wandering minstrel his roof looked upon himself as singled out for good fortune. Yet they who could boast of this distinction were few; for the stranger traveled fast, and rarely spent two nights in the same district. But the fame of his visits remained long in the land; and the children of those men were to cherish the memory, and hand it down to their children.

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THORNKLOFI did not go direct to Ringariki, as he had at first intended. When he came down to the mouth of Numdal, and reached the fork of the roads, one of which leads north into Sigurd's realm, the other south into Westfold, it entered his mind that he would go direct to Ravenness and Tunsberg, and find out for himself whether Gandalf and Haki had indeed invaded the land, as they might be expected to do.

He tried to put this thought from him; but in spite of his sober judgment, his love of adventure, spurred by the Celtic boyishness in him, drove him on. To quiet the protests of his better sense, he decided to leave it to the decision of chance, or Fate and cutting two crosses at about a hand's-breath distance from each other in the bark of a pine, he called one "Westfold" and the other "Ringariki."

Then he stepped off five paces, and hurled the knife at the tree-trunk. It stuck quivering in the wood; and when he looked to see which cross was closest to the blade, it was the one which stood for Westfold. So he sheathed the knife, drew his hood closer about his face, and trudged south.

About twilight, just north of Ravenness, and still five miles north of the royal hall at Tunsberg, he stopped in mid-stride, listening intently. He felt sure he heard the distant hoof-beats of a horse; but the sound stopped soon, and he heard it no more. He shrugged his shoulders, wrapped his cloak tighter—for it was cold—and walked on. It was quite dark when he saw the lighted windows of the hall ahead, and heard the sounds of men reveling.

THIS WOODEN features looking fierce and distorted in the flare of the fire-light, the carven Odin over the high-seat glared down at Gandalf as if in godlike anger that such a thing as this dared to sit on the throne of Halfdan. But the king of Vingulmark paid no heed to its displeasure; indeed, he felt mightily proud of himself. After years of bitter struggle with the murdered monarch, and a short and no less bitter struggle with Harald, he had at last invaded his enemy's realm and made it his own.

Hardly a month after Harald's departure, having convinced his cowardly soul that Haki was right, and that Harald would never survive his rash venture, Gandalf had set sail for Tunsberg with his ships filled with warriors, while the berserk marched down on Westfold from his Swedish lair. There had been no opposition, for all the house-carles and all the clans were in the North with their king. Only the old men, the women, and immature children remained.

The warriors of Vingulmark had rare sport with these. Times had been hard in Westfold for the poor and the helpless. Bullying, looting, ravishing, the invaders had enjoyed themselves to the full. Harald had been considerate enough to leave good ale in the storehouse, and it was not wasted.

Tonight Gandalf was somewhat disturbed, for sudden guests had brought him unwelcome news. Having covered several hundred miles of indifferently comfortable sea, Solvi Klofi had appeared in panic haste, bringing the news of the defeat of the Thrandheimers at Harald's hands. Except when unpleasant thoughts brought a savage, evil gleam to his eyes, and wiped off the beauty of his features, Solvi was a remarkably handsome young man, albeit something broad-faced.

He sat in the seat of honor opposite Gandalf; and the play of his features was remarkable, oscilating between dislike and suspicion as he gazed at his host and Haki —who leaned over Gandalf's chair—and a pleasant self-satisfaction in the contemplation of the beautiful woman who sat beside him. Unusually radiant and lovely, Thora exerted all her fascination upon Solvi; for Haki had warned her that the Butcher's invincible arm was as necessary to his schemes as were the warriors and influence of Gandalf.

It was a dangerous game she had to play; for Haki had been using her beauty as a lure to hold Gandalf's wavering resolution; and now she must win over Solvi—between whom and the berserk there was an ancient grudge—without arousing Gandalf's jealous suspicion. It was Haki's purpose to use both these men; Gandalf's power and credit were to win over to the berserk the sea-kings of the South, Thorir Long-Chin and Kiotvi the Wealthy; and Solvi's presence in the alliance would assure the adherence of many lesser chiefs who feared to oppose the Butcher.

But Thora, wise with the cunning of the woman who lives by her power to please,

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played her game well. Solvi, usually sour in his cups, beamed whenever he looked upon her; and when he turned away, his ensnarer cast sweet glances at Gandalf, as if to ensure him that she but played with the formidable Thrandheimer.

From his place beside the king, Haki watched the play with shrewd interest. He hated Solvi and despised Gandalf; but now that Harald was triumphant in Thrandheim, the berserk knew he must neglect no one who hated Harald. If Thora performed her part successfully, both men would fall into his net; and after he had squeezed out every particle of assistance they could render him, he would cast them off. This would be easy; a word to Thora, and she would fan their growing interest in her into jealous hate; then they would fly at each other's throats.

Now and again a cynical smile would twist his lips, as other thoughts employed him. He was getting tired of Thora; between him and her kisses the face of Gunnhild constantly intruded. Once she had won over these two pawns into his hand, he would have no further use for her; for her powerful kinsmen, now dead by Harald's hand, had power no longer to help or to injure him.

She had borne up bravely when Solvi brought the news of her brother's death, and without a tear, she had thrown herself into the task Haki cut out for her. But she wearied him, and he made up his mind, when her usefulness was over, to turn her off. Any pretext would do.

Ever and again he whispered into Gandalf's ear, filling the monarch's mind with distrust of Solvi, with fear of the Butcher, and with dark hints that however evil a friend the Thrandheimer was, he must be conciliated until they could use him to destroy the still more dangerous Harald. Gandalf was in a state of tremor; there was something almost timorous in the way he clung to Haki. The very frequency with which he kept the mead circulating indicated the uneasiness of his mind.

But the house-carles had no tremors. Well and thoroughly drunk with repeated potions, they roared obscene jests and ugly songs, laughed loudly at the stupidest witticism, and gave themselves over to utter mirth without a thought for the anxiety of their king.

His face dark with suspicion, Solvi flushed at the continued whisperings opposite him.

"What are you two scheming about?" he called thickly.

"Haki is urging me to stir up Eysteinn of Hordaland against Harald," Gandalf evaded. "I hesitate, for I do not trust Eysteinn."

"It is your weakness not to trust any one, you fox," the other taunted him. "If you had trusted Halfdan, you need never have antagonized him, and had not been foolish enough to murder him. Oh, do not shake your head! The world knows it. If you had trusted the Five Kings, you would not have tried to trap them at Ringsakir, and brought about their downfall and your own isolation.

"If you knew enough to trust me now, you would turn over your fleet to me, press your peasants into a new army, stir up Eysteinn, and raise a great host. Then, when Harald returns, he would find you ready for him. As it is, you wait his leisure here, drinking like a fool, while he prepares to descend on you and put you to the sword. In the North we call such trustlessness cowardice."

Gandalf flushed.

"You use ill words, Solvi," he rejoined, with an attempt at dignity. "It would be well for you to remember that you are my guest, that only my hospitality stands between you and——"

"And murder at the hand of your bully, there!" Solvi jeered. "You dare not murder me, Gandalf; and neither Haki nor any other man is so sure of himself as to draw sword on me."

"Between you and exile, or death at the hand of Harald," Haki interposed. "We must stick together now, Solvi. Practise the trust you teach."

Drunk as they were, the house-carles had felt the tenseness in the atmosphere, and had become silent, watching. Slowly, softly, the warriors of Vingulmark had drawn apart from Solvi's men, each party edging over toward its lord, waiting for the least signal he might give. But Haki's words somewhat relieved the strain, and hands were leaving sword-hilts again, when the door swung wide, letting in the chill night air.

Every eye turned toward the doorway. A tall, stooped man stood there, swathed in a voluminous, badly worn cloak, the hood of which concealed his face to the

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eyes. He seemed unarmed, and bore a harp in his left hand. Out of the illumination of the firelight and the torches, and wrapped as he was, there was no way of telling whether he was friend or foe. One thing was certain: he was a stranger; for he was no man of Gandalf's or Solvi's; and to both chiefs, any stranger might prove an enemy.

SOLVI'S overstrained nerves gave way, so that he forgot the deference he owed his host.

"Who in the name of the Midgard Snake are you?" he snapped at the mysterious visitor, "and who bade you enter?"

"If you will let your sentries get drunk," the other answered in a deep, musical voice, "you should be thankful when a friend comes to tell you how ill you are guarded."

"Then, having told us, get out!" Solvi commanded; but Gandalf, resenting his interference, bade the stranger take a place at one of the benches and make himself free of a horn of ale.

"And then," he urged politely, "tell us what errand brings you here, and what manner of man you are."

Hornklofi was hardly minded to accept drink of his former master's murderer; but wisely reflected that to refuse the proffered hospitality would bring upon him the suspicion of harboring enmity. Accordingly he took the horn which the beer-thane held out, and sat down, without removing the hood from his face.

"I'm a wanderer harper," he explained, "as you may see from my instrument here. My lord, a Danish earl in Scotland, found a younger man whose voice he liked better, and gave me my quittance. I secured passage to Norway on a trading-ship, and have wandered about singing for food and bed, until I heard that King Gandalf, the conqueror of Westfold, kept open house for bards. I have some skill, and will gladly pay in verse for my entertainment."

Gandalf pondered a moment; then asked:

"Have you perchance heard anything, in your travels, of one whom men call Harald Fairhair, whom I drove out of this land?"

"Something, indeed, I have heard. Men say he has subdued all Thrandheim, and purposes to sail south before long; but whether he dares come hither, or only intends to harry the West Coast, I do not know. Still, if one so humble might offer advice to a king, I would advise you to keep a stricter watch than you have tonight; for yonder door is wide enough to admit six men abreast, with room to wield their spears, and you might easily be surprised some night when your carles have drunk deep."

Gandalf felt suddenly cold, and glanced covertly at the door, as if he already saw armed men bursting in, thirsting for his blood. But he forced himself to assume an air of bland indifference; and to give himself time to recover courage, graciously asked the minstrel to lay aside his hood, that all might see the face of so accomplished a guest.

"That I can not do, my lord," the bard answered boldly. "When I turned my face in sorrow from my master's door, I swore to hide my face from men until I should find service in the household of another as good as he. But I will sing you a song, if you will hear it; and perhaps it will please you to like my skill. If so, my vow may be nearer its end than I think for."

Before either Gandalf or the openly suspicious Solvi could object, he struck the strings of his harp and launched into a wild war-song on the deeds of Ivarr the Boneless, a famous marauder. The words were not his own, for his poetry was known to all who pretended a knowledge of good verse, and he dared not betray himself by singing one of his own compositions; but he had no fear that any would recognize his voice, for he knew that no one present had heard him. Into the singing, therefore, he threw all the rich beauty of his marvelous voice, all the skill of his full experience and training.

When the last splendid note died away, Gandalf clapped his hands in genuine admiration, and the house-carles burst into fierce—though somewhat maudlin—shouts of delight. Hornklofi, watching his dangerous hosts keenly, saw that even Solvi could not restrain his pleasure in the performance. Still, knowing the latter would recover his suspicions as soon as the effect of the song wore off, he resolved to give him no chance to interrupt, and cut short the applause with a vibrant chord. Silence was restored, and he began the wailing numbers of a dirge. All listened with breathless attention.

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And now for the second time that evening, it seemed to Hornklofi that he heard the staccato beat of a horse's hoofs, pounding through the rhythm of his song with their swifter cadence. He sang more softly, listening as he sang; and ever the hoof-beats grew louder, till they tore through the fabric of the dirge, rattled right up to the hall, and thundered just outside.

With a ring like a sob, the harp broke off in the midst of a stave; Solvi leaped cursing from his seat; and Gandalf, suddenly pale, half rose in a quiver of alarm. A sentry, scared white and sober, thrust the door open wide; and there burst in upon them a muffled figure on a great black horse, riding straight into the hall. Even to the dais it rode, and there drew rein so abruptly that the steed was flung, panting and foaming, back on to its haunches.

Haki alone retained his composure. The berserk plunged forward, seized the horse by the bits, and backed it to the middle of the hall; then he stood by its head, one hand on his sword-hilt. The muffled figure spoke no word, but stared straight at the king; in turn, Gandalf stared at it.

Again it was Solvi who hailed the intruder. Gazing from the swathed head to the still unseen features of the minstrel, seeing in the new apparition a confirmation of his suspicions of the first, he cried out:

"What do you mean, you dog, to ride thus unbidden into the presence of a king? Say what you come for, or I will thrust my sword between your ribs!"

He half drew his sword.

Without so much as glancing in his direction, the intruder kept his gaze fixed on Gandalf; and in loud, clear tones that fell with terrible, slow warning, said:

"Flee, slayer of a king, for the avenger comes! The ships of Harald are even now speeding by Agdir, countless as hungry gulls; and Sigurd Stag, with a hundred warriors, is hasting against you from the North! Flee, for Death comes, and will strike swiftly!"

Knowing well that Harald was still in Thrandheim, and would make no attack for months, Hornklofi wondered what was the purpose of this lie. Haki too had his doubts, for he laughed shortly, saying:

"Frighten old women with these tales, but do not feed them to us. Sigurd Stag never saw the day when he could muster a hundred carles; and now most of his men are in Thrandheim."

"Sigurd has been recruiting the peasants of Hadeland, who hate you, while you lay here in idleness," the horseman answered. "Tarry, if you will; but steel is nearer to your heart than you think."

Still unimpressed, Haki listened to the words with deceptive attention; and when the other had finished, he said in tones that were menacingly sweet:

"I think I have heard your voice before, oh foolish one. What do men call you in the place of your birth?"

There was no answer. His eyes fixed on the muffled form, Haki suddenly seized the folds of cloth that swathed its head, and threw them aside. Hornklofi leaped from his seat. It was Gunnhild! All stared in wonder; Solvi gazed at her with eyes that drank in her beauty.

BUT swift as Haki was, Gunnhild was no less so. She thrust her hand in her cloak, drew it out again, and struck at the beserk, all in one lightning motion. When the hand came away again, it was red and drippping, and so was the knife it held. Haki spun 'round, blood pouring from his throat, and collapsed in a heap on the floor.

For an instant, every man in the hall was numb and speechless with horror; then, all at once, they started forward to overwhelm the girl. She looked at the seething mob with utter fearlessness, brave eyes unfaltering, proud face unmoved. The gathering wave of house-carles surged forward; from the guest-seat Solvi leaped down, swinging his sword.

But before the wave could break, or the terrible Thrandheimer could reach its rearmost rim, the minstrel threw aside his ragged cloak, whirling out a five-foot length of glittering steel, and flung himself between. The Irish blade mowed down two men, flashed again, and bore a third to the floor; again—and the warriors swerved aside, panic-stricken. Hornklofi seized the horse by the bridle, still holding the fearful blade in his right hand, and urged steed and rider toward the door.

In that moment Solvi pressed forward between it and them. His point threatened the horse's breast; but before he could thrust, Hornklofi hewed straight down at him. Guided by strength of but one hand.

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the heavy weapon swerved, missed Solvi, but struck his sword and dashed it from his hand. Leaping up behind the rider, Hornklofi smacked the horse upon the flank, and the fiery beast plunged out into the darkness, gathering speed with each bound, till it raced beneath them with hoofs that clanged on the crackling, frozen road.

Like a hive of angry bees, the housecarles, feeling new courage now that their foe had fled, dashed out after the fugitives. Confused orders rang out from the hall; but most of them were too excited to hear. Their own horses were in the stables fifty yards away; moreover, their drink-muddled brains could hold only one idea—to pursue at once, stopping for nothing. They kept on till the breath was gone from their bodies; then, one by one, gave over the chase. It was as well they did, seeing that the mighty black, even with the weight of two, was the swiftest horse in all Norway.

When the distance swallowed the last angry shout of the pursuing mob, Hornklofi said to his companion:

"It was rank folly, Gunnhild, brave as it was. How should I have dared face Harald with the tidings of your death, if you had fallen into their hands? Indeed, it came near to costing the lives of both of us."

"Is it well with him?" she cried, ignoring his question. "Is he—alive, and safe?"

Smiling rather sadly to himself, and never pretending not to understand whom the girl meant, Hornklofi replied—

"Aye, he lives, and has not even a wound to show for the liveliest work that has been seen in the North in the memory of man."

"Then why," Gunnhild asked, with a kind of fierce reproach, "has he sent no word to me? Surely he knew how my heart was torn with fear for him! And that good, faithful man my father, who loves him for his father's sake and his own, has grieved sorely for him, thinking that he must have perished. It was not kind or just of him, Hornklofi!"

Now Hornklofi, in the interest of another's love true enough to struggle with his own, lied boldly for Harald's sake.

"He was never unmindful of your anxiety, Gunnhild, and would have spared it if he could; but indeed, he has been in such straits that he needed every single arm, every weapon, every valiant heart. So soon as it was possible to dispense with any one's service, he sent me to you. It was only my own whim—or perchance the will of the gods—that took me out of my way to Westfold; and I thank Allfather Odin that it did do so."

There was a short silence; then:

"Ah, I am so glad, Hornklofi! I never feared to lose his love, for I know him to be faithful and strong; but I am not one to be satisfied with any but the greatest, tenderest love. I shall bring my husband much, and I expect him to give me much in turn: trust, and tenderness, and full confidence. He must not be so absorbed in his work as not to share it with me. All his thoughts must be mine as well; only so can I be of real help to him. And he must not forget—no, not for a moment—to be as thoughtful of me as I of him."

"You will find Harald so. Just before I left him, we spoke of his affection for you. His is a very great love, Gunnhild. You must always believe in it. But now tell me the meaning of your strange journey, and why you warned Gandalf to guard himself from an attack that is not even planned?"

Gunnhild laughed softly, and sighed; as if her joy in knowing her lover safe was still oppressed with the doubt and longing she had felt for so many months.

"Why," she answered, "knowing nothing of what was happening in the wild North, fearing ever lest Harald should even then be lying stark and cold, dead in the task I imposed on him, it came into my mind that if he should be past returning to his own land, it would please his spirit if that land could be freed from the cruel power of Gandalf.

"So, since I was sure Gandalf was a coward, I thought it might be possible to frighten him away with a tale of Harald victorious and vengeful, coming swiftly to take back his own and slay his enemy. If I could convince him of the truth of my story, I knew he would flee back to Vingulmark; and then, if Harald were dead, at least his spirit could rest content in the grave.

"But question for question, Hornklofi: who was that fierce-faced youth who strove to keep us from the door, and whom you so lightly taught to respect his betters?"

The skald grew grave

"That was Solvi Klofi," he told her; "and he has few betters in all this land, at

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least in the craft of war If he and I had met in the open field, with no escape for the vanquished, I should have commended my soul to Odin, for it would have gone hard with me."

Gunnhild drew in her breath with a sharp little gasp

"So he is Solvi the Butcher," she commented. "I did not know that, or I should have been too frightened to play my game through. He is another sort of man from Haki; though Haki is bad enough. How cunningly he saw through my trick, and how nearly I fell into his trap! I owe much to the point of my knife!"

"Much indeed. Pray the gods you killed him, though I fear he is too tough a bird to die of a knife-thrust. He may live to do great harm yet. Hark! Who comes?"

He reined in the horse, dismounted, and led the beast by the bridle into a clump of alders beside the road. Here they were well screened from observation, but could themselves see the way for several rods in either direction. Hornklofi listened intently for a few moments; and being at last sure of what he heard, whispered to Gunnhild:

"Horsemen from the north; and a veritable host! They can not have ridden around us?"

"No," the girl answered softly, "for this is the only road, and too many streams cut up the plains for them to venture by any other way. Nor is there any man in all this district, save only Haki and Gandalf, who is not friendly to Harald. It may be my father, searching for me. I stole away in the night, leaving word with my handmaid to tell him when he called for me in the morning. If she told him sooner, he might have had time to reach here even this early."

He drew her closer into the shadow of the trees. Gradually the cavalcade came nearer, with a mighty drumming of hoofs and jingling of mail. It might be Sigurd Stag, but if it were not . . . .

"Faster, you sluggards! If you do not find her alive and unharmed, you shall curse the day the Norns twisted your birth-threads!"

"It was a fine, fresh voice, though tense with anger and fear.

"My father!" cried Gunnhild aloud, forgetting or unheeding that she would be heard.

"Halt!" roared the voice, "Gunnhild, my child! Where are you?"

And riding toward the place whence her voice had sounded, he came out full into their sight. A fine figure he was on horseback, the splendidly-made old warrior: his head bare to the night, his great beard flooding over his chain-mail.

Hornklofi advanced from their hiding-place, drawing the girl after him. So soon as he saw her Sigurd sprang from his horse, strode up to her, and caught her in his arms. She, too, flung both arms around his neck, laughing and sobbing.

"You madcap!" he scolded her—but tenderly, for all the roughness of his words, "you madcap, you brain-sick child! What do you mean by causing your old foster-father all this wo? Where have you been? To Gandalf's, as Herdis told me? Did you not know the risks you ran? Did you not know that if aught harmed you, I should have led my twenty carles into the rascal's hall, and slain him, if I had died for it the next moment?"

All this time Hornklofi stood in the road, unnoticed, smiling that melancholy smile of his, as of one who sees the world pass him by without a look, and cheerily bids her pass on, though underneath his heart will ache a little. As for Gunnhild, she told her story, with little bursts of happy laughter the while; and when she came to her rescue by Hornklofi, and the ride home, Sigurd looked at the man in the road for the first time, with sheer wonder on his face.

"Why, Hornklofi!" he cried, "I never heeded you, lad. Why, in the Serpent's name, did you not let me know who you were? I had eyes only for my daughter. Give me your hand, you bane of drunken house-carles! There! You have my thanks, though the gods know I can never repay you. What are you doing here? Is Harald well?"

It was Gunnhild who answered.

"Aye, father, he is well, and has won all Thrandheim!" she told him joyfully.

"The young champion! My ancester Ragnarr Lodbrok was a child beside him. Lads, my girl tells me that Gandalf is frightened out of his wits by a mere lying tale that Harald and I were coming. I believe he and his rats would run in good sooth if they once heard the sound of our horses and saw the shine of our mail. Shall we

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try it? Shall we on to Tunsberg? They are too many for us; but they are badly frightened; and men have not forgotten how Sigurd Stag can fight! What say you?"

There was but a single answer. With one voice, the twenty house-carles shouted—

"On! On!"

"Then on it is. Gunnhild, you will bide here with Hornklofi. If we do not return before daybreak, ride to Ringariki with all the speed you may, and warn the folk that their king is dead."

Gunnhild started to protest. She would not remain behind, she declared, while her foster-father was fighting; but Sigurd checked her sternly:

"Be silent. You have made enough trouble for one night. You bide here. Hornklofi, I hold you responsible for her."

Hornklofi grasped the old man's hand.

"You may rest assured," he answered. "She shall not stir from this spot."

"Farewell, then, and pray for our success."

And shaking his bridle-rein, he rode on, the troop jingling and clanking behind him.

THE eery, trembling hush before dawn: torn suddenly in sunder, as a cloth is torn, by the dissonant shriek of a hungry raven. Again, and again, the hideous bird persisted in his hateful outcry. All nature seemed to shiver with foreboding at the sound; and Gunnhild, Hornklofi's cloak wrapped 'round her, felt a chill at her heart deeper than the chill of the frost-bound morning. Day was all but here; and Sigurd had not returned. She held the skald's arm in fingers that nearly went to the bone, and shaking it fiercely, cried:

"I will not go back! I will stay here till he comes, or till death overtakes me too!"

Hornklofi held up his hand.

"There is no need, lass," he said gently. "I hear horsemen, and it will doubtless be Sigurd. Yet stay close behind the trees, lest a mistake should prove our death."

The clamor of hoofs, the ring of arms, and the faint, far sound of a man's voice gustily roaring out a song. Nearer and nearer, till the song was loud and clear, and the words were plain:

We hewed with sharp sword-edges! Fifty and one great battles
I've won, O God of Battles! and knew no warrior stronger!
We hewed with sharp sword-edges!——

"Ragnarr's Death-Song!" shouted the skald. "Glory to Odin! It is Sigurd!"

And Sigurd it was. At the head of his glittering horsemen, he swept proudly around the curve of the southern road, tossing his sword high in the air and catching it as it came down, while his horse galloped on, and the words of the grand old song poured from his lips.

"Count them!" the skald shouted. "Count them, Gunnhild! Twenty, and Sigurd at their head! Not a man missing!"

Almost to their very feet the warrior-king galloped, and reined in his horse so sharply that its forefeet pawed the air thrice before they came down.

"Victory!" shouted Sigurd. "Victory for a maid and a bard! Gandalf and his bandits are gone! They have cleared the land, without leaving a single cut-throat behind!"

Gunnhild and Hornklofi pressed about him, both questioning him at once.

"All gone, I tell you!" he repeated. "When we came to the court, there was no stir, no sound, no sight of man or beast. We rode to the hall: the door was wide open, and the hall was empty. On we went to the warriors' quarters: they too were open and deserted. Not a horse stood in the stables. We hasted toward the shore; and as we drew within sight of the water, we heard the *thuck*, *thuck*, of oars on the pine, and the splash of dipping blades. It was too dark to see much; but I urged my horse on to the sands, and dimly made out the loom of ships.

"Soon they melted into the night, and the sounds grew fainter and were lost. Gunnhild, my lass, your trick worked. They believed you; or at least that coward Gandalf did. Oh, what a tale for Harald's ears! His kingdom won back, and all through the tale of a girl and the sword of a skald! Well, home again! You are to be my guest, Hornklofi, until the king comes to claim you. Mount! The black carried two so far, and he can the rest of the way."

They mounted, and the procession moved on toward Ringariki.

"Gunnhild," said Hornklofi, "your fearlessness has beaten an army and won a

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kingdom; but I would give much to know what Solvi thinks of the affair."

CHAPTER XIV

SOLVI'S THOUGHTS

THE insuring days were fraught with a pleasure infused with pain for Hornklofi. Poet and half-Celt that he was, he felt a peculiar, poignant fascination in consuming his heart with an unreturned love, pretending to himself that the splendid Gunnhild loved him rather than another, reading her kindness and genuine liking for him as something fonder; and then going off by himself to laugh, softly and bitterly, at his pretty self-delusion. He never really deceived himself, nor wanted to; but it pleased his fancy to play his heart as a fisherman plays a struggling salmon.

Yet not for a moment did he make love to the girl. Much as she was to him, there was that in the man's nature which made him love his master more; with another kind of devotion, to be sure; but still a greater. He took the friendliness shown him, hugged it to his heart, and then mocked himself for the aching joy it brought him.

As for Gunnhild, since she never guessed his feelings, she unwittingly tortured them a hundred times a day. All her thoughts were with Harald; and she sought the skald's company constantly that she might talk to him of the king. It did not occur to her to conceal her love, or to be ashamed that others should know of it. Rather she gloried in it, for which Hornklofi loved and admired her the more.

So the time passed; and on the fourth day, just as twilight came on, Gunnhild withdrew to the bower to complete a gorgeous tapestry on which was pictured Harald's victory over the Five Kings. There was no longer daylight enough for work, so she filled a stone lamp; and having trouble with the wick, carried it to the window to trim it. Something moved her to look out; and with the lamp still in her hand, she peered out into the gathering dark.

Surely something was moving in the osier-clump over by the lake. Gunnhild hid herself as well as she could behind the heavy curtain, still peeping out beyond its edge. Yes, something was stirring over there: something that flitted about between the osier-stems, as if searching for the best place from which to see without being seen.

By and by, the darkness deepening, a shadow stole out from the trees and crept cautiously toward the house. It vanished around the corner of the hall; but soon after, still watching, Gunnhild saw it appear again, coming toward the bower, and looking up at the windows. Now she could see it plainly, and made out a man in a cloak of dark stuff, his face showing a pallid blur against the twilight. Close under her window it came.

Gunnhild thought swiftly; and deciding instantly what to do, she threw her lamp out of the window, close by the man's side. Then she leaned out, so that he could see her plainly, and called to him:

"Here, fellow! I have dropped my lamp; hand it to me!"

The man started, and pausing as if in doubt whether to obey or to flee, at last stooped to pick up the lamp. On the instant Gunnhild swung herself over the wooden ledge and threw herself down upon him. Her weight, falling fully six feet, bowled the man over cleanly; and before he could struggle, she had her hands about his throat. But he made no move, and groaned as if in pain.

Shifting her position, Gunnhild saw that one of his legs was doubled under him at an unnatural angle, and knew it must be broken. He was helpless, therefore, and unarmed, so there was no danger in him. The girl rose, picked him up in her strong, round arms, and carried him around the house into the hall.

On a bench by the fire, Sigurd and Hornklofi sat side by side, talking earnestly. When Gunnhild's feet, made heavy by her burden, sounded on the planks, both men looked up, and Sigurd sprang to his feet.

"What is it, lass?" he questioned. "Is one of the lads hurt? But what in the name of all the Frost-Giants! This is none of our fellows. How came he here, and why?"

Gunnhild laid the man down on a bench, placing one of the seat-cushions under his head, and called for a servant to fetch water. When this was brought, she sent the carle for splints and bandages, which were always on hand in great houses, being needed for the emergencies of war and hunting. Not until she had them, and had set to work on the injured man, would she say a word. At last:

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"Here, Hornklofi!" she said, "help me set his leg. See, there is the break; and a bad one, too."

The skald did as she bade; and after the first pain was past, the man was soon resting comfortably, having been properly bandaged and given to drink.

"I think, father," said Gunnhild, "he is one of Haki's berserks. At least, he is no man of ours, nor any of the peasants. He has a strange, wild look, and his face is fierce."

The fellow tried to sit up, but Gunnhild held him. But faint with pain as he was, he could not be kept from talking.

"The maid is right," he told them. "I serve Haki."

Sigurd's face darkened.

"Then what were you doing here?" he barked. "Do you not know it is death for any of you wood-wolves to be caught about an honest man's garth? There is no love between your master and me, so you could have come for no good purpose."

"Nor did I. I was sent to spy upon you."

"Hawk! Gautrek!" Sigurd shouted; and feet were heard clumping down the outside stairs from the loft.

A moment later the two thanes came in; and Sigurd pointed to the prostrate berserk.

"Take this rascal out to the edge of the wood," he commanded, "and hang him up for a warning!"

HAWK and Gautrek laid hold of him; but Gunnhild thrust them aside and turned sharply on her foster-father.

"No!" she cried, "No! he would never have been taken if he had not tried to do me a service, and in my service he was hurt. I demand his life as a gift; and whether it be denied me or not, I will not permit him to be injured further!"

Sigurd shrugged his shoulders.

"As you will," he replied; "but by rights he ought to swing. He is yours now, and the burden of his deeds be upon your shoulders. But look to him well, for if I catch him in any mischief, he shall die."

The berserk, unafraid, looked steadily into Sigurd's eyes.

"If you had hanged me," he said, "what I know would have perished with me, and it might have gone ill with you. I owe you little thanks, but I would not see this maid come to harm, for she is gentle and good. What if I do serve Haki? An outlaw can not choose his master."

"Nor need an outlaw expect to serve honest men," Sigurd retorted. "Why are you an outlaw, if you are not a rascal like your master?"

"It concerns you not," the berserk retorted defiantly; but Gunnhild bent over him, asking:

"Since there is good enough in your heart to wish well to me, who caused your hurt, you may tell me what you will not tell my father. What is your name, and why are you an outlaw?"

"Because I slew my brother," the man answered. "As for my name, it matters little; but it is Aslak Thordsson."

"And why did you slay your brother?" Sigurd taunted. "For gold?"

The man flushed.

"If I had the use of my feet, and were armed, you would not say that to me. I slew my brother because he enticed my wife from me, though it is no business of yours to know."

Sigurd mused a little, then answered:

"Indeed, that was cause enough for manslaying. Was that all, or was there more?"

"That was all. Hogni Eysteinsson declared me outlaw and wolf's-head for that alone."

Sigurd stared at him.

"Hogni it was who outlawed you, then? Why did you not come to me? Did you not know that any enemy of Eysteinn's house is my friend?"

Aslak groaned.

"If I had known it, I had never served Haki. Now you know me, and have heard all, do you still wish my death?"

"Not if you will change your service and your way of living," Sigurd assured him. "Man, if you will swear to be faithful and upright, I will take you into my own housecarles, and will undertake to persuade Harald to declare you within the law again."

Once more Aslak struggled to rise; but this time it was pleasure and gratitude that reddened his face.

"I swear," he said; "and to begin my service well, I will tell you that which may mean much to you. Gandalf and all his men, together with Haki, who is sorely wounded, have gone over the fjord to Vingulmark."

"This I know," said Sigurd, "for I saw them go."

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"Aye, but there is more that you do not know. Haki's men did not go with them, being under orders to take Solvi as their leader until Haki shall be recovered."

"Is he not wounded to death, then?" Hornklofi interrupted.

"Not he; there is venom in him yet. He will recover, though his hurt is somewhat inflamed, owing to the ale he had drunk just before receiving it. He has dismissed Thora, his mistress, accusing her of playing him false with Solvi; though that is a mere pretext to get rid of her."

"Thora?" interrupted Gunnhild. "Is she the woman I saw beside Solvi at Tunsberg?"

"Aye. Well, Haki, who is now able to speak, told Solvi that the maid who stabbed him was Sigurd Stag's foster-daughter; so I suppose you are she, lady. He gave the Butcher his forty berserks, in order that Solvi might take vengeance for him by invading your land. Haki is greatly angered against you for spoiling his schemes; for Gandalf, who was to have joined with him and Solvi against Harald, is now too badly frightened to stir from his own realm.

"They intend that Solvi shall fall upon you and destroy Sigurd and his whole household, excepting Gunnhild, whom he is to bring to Haki. Solvi plans to march hither after dark tomorrow night. You are badly outnumbered, but now that you know the matter, at least you can flee in time."

"Flee!" roared Sigurd. "Fellow, you speak to the grandson of Ragnarr Lodbrok! I will not flee; rather will I stir up the peasants, who are obliged to me for keeping off such wolves often in the past. They are hard fighters when they have a leader, and I will be leader enough for them.

"You, Hawk, run north among the woodfolk; Gautrek, do you go south and east to rouse the farmers. Bid them speed hither as fast as they may, with their arms, their wives and their children. Let them never heed their cattle; I will pay for any damage done. Make haste, and see that you get them all here before the fowls go to roost tomorrow night! We will prepare a red welcome for the Butcher!"

Hawk and Gautrek took their mail-shirts down from the wall, girded on their swords and knives, and sped out of the opposite doors of the hall. Sigurd, cooled down at last, bent over the bench where Aslak lay.

"I thank you, Aslak!" he said, with frank kindliness. "I have insulted you and done you wrong; but from now on you are my man, and I will not only atone for my hasty words, but will also see that no other offends you in word or deed. Is it well between us?"

"Well indeed," Aslak answered, not without effort, for he was exhausted. "And now, if I may sleep a while, master?"

"Sleep, then, and may your hurt heal well. You shall not lack for tender care."

THE night passed; and the next day was tense with anxious expectation. Sigurd and Hornklofi were kept busy serving out helmets and mail birnies to the peasants who had begun to pour in at dawn, and now came even from the outlying districts in a steady stream. So great was the people's hatred of the berserks that the very Hedemarkers and Numdal-men left their homes to swell the forces of Ringariki.

By noon, two hundred farmers and foresters had arrived, and at least forty more might be expected. Nor were they expected in vain, though some, who had many miles to traverse, did not appear until nearly dark. Hawk and Gautrek had done their work well: the news that Sigurd Stag, after a peaceful life of nearly three years, was to raise his banner again brought out every man who had suffered wrong at Haki's hand.

Even the women of the royal stead had work enough to keep them busy all day: they feathered arrow-shafts, sharpened knives, and made bandages. As for the men, they were given charge of bands of peasants, showed them their stations, and instructed them in their duty.

The plan of operations was simple. The berserks, who always fought with spears, swords, and axes, under the stimulus of a self-induced animal frenzy, scorned the bow as the weapon of cowards. Certainly they would have no archers with them this time, since they were sure of taking Sigurd by surprise, and did not dream that they would have more than a score of men to encounter.

They would creep up under cover of the night, rush the enclosure about the hall and out-buildings, and attempt to set fire to the houses. Then when their victims should rush out of the burning buildings, they would cut down all who escaped the flames. Such was their regular method of attack.

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But this time they would fall into their own trap. Sigurd had told off fifty men, in groups of five each, to guard every approach to the house. These outposts, clad in dark coats over their mail the better to avoid observation, received orders to run to the palisade as soon as they saw or heard the enemy, report the direction of his approach, and then scatter about the settlement to find and bring in the other outposts.

The gate of the palisade was to be left open; but to right and left of it, inside, barricades of timber were constructed, behind which the bowmen were stationed, to the number of about thirty on each side. The main body of the defense, between six and seven score peasants stiffened by Sigurd's twenty house-carles, were drawn up in two columns, one of which was placed in ambush on each side of the great hall, near its further end. The darkness, and the shadow of the building, would hide them effectually until the berserks should be well inside the enclosure.

Hawk urged that the outposts were unnecessary, since the enemy must direct its attack against the gate of the enclosure in order to get at the hall; but Sigurd insisted on the original plan.

"This is a very pleasant hall," he said, "and has great traditions attached to it. I do not wish to have it go up in flame. The gate looks to the south, from which direction the wind is even now blowing. The chances are that the berserks will come from the north, from the forests of Hadeland. Well, if the wind stays as it is, they will come about the garth, and attack the gate, as you say; but suppose the wind shifts about into the north or northeast?

"Then they will surely take advantage of it, and set fire to the northern wall of the palisade; and the sparks will blow straight against the dry timbers of the hall and outhouses. But with my outposts to let us know when they come, we can sally out of the gate, re-group our host, and fall upon them before they can light their torches."

The defenders had not long to wait. Less than three hours after twilight, the outpost stationed northeast of the hall reported the enemy just in sight on the edge of the wood, and creeping south along its border.

"I thought so," commented Sigurd, "since the wind still holds from the south."

Evidently Solvi feared observation; for the next report came in almost simultaneously from the southeast and south, with the eastern outpost unheard from. Those who had reported were sent in haste to bring in their comrades; but before they could return, the enemy attacked.

Sigurd, in the post of danger behind the open gate, saw a line of steel-clad men rise up out of the reeds at the edge of the lake and run silently and swiftly toward the gate. Their leader, a finely built man in shining mail, led them just inside of the enclosure, and there halted them, signing to four or five to light the torches which they bore.

But before they could touch flint to steel, Sigurd darted forth from behind the wooden gate, struck the leader to the ground, and blew a blast on his horn. All together the archers loosed from behind their barricades, invisible by reason of the dark and the black paint with which the timbers had been smeared; and the peasants and house-carles charged from both sides of the hall.

It happened so swiftly that the berserks were for a moment too dazed either to fight or to flee. Enfiladed at close range by a galling blast of arrows, over half their number fell at the first discharge. A second poured in at once; then the peasants and house-carles swept down upon them. Sigurd threw himself against the gate, hoping to close the only avenue of escape; but three of the berserks had fallen directly athwart the opening; and before he could move them he was thrust through it by the pressure of fighting men. And now the archers had to cease, lest they hit their own comrades.

Thrown flat by the concussion of Sigurd's sword against his helmet, Solvi had escaped the hail of arrows, and now picked himself up, rejoicing in the thick steel that had turned his enemy's blade. His men, outnumbered ten to one, were jammed close together by the press, and were fighting with desperate courage. Brandishing his sword, Solvi threw himself into the conflict. His first stroke cut down the fiery Hawk, who was so carried away with the excitement of combat that he forgot to guard his head.

Lashing out furiously, outwardly cool though seething with disappointed rage, Solvi covered the retreat of his men through the narrow gate; but despite his efforts, scarcely ten men won free. The Butcher himself had barely crossed the threshold when Sigurd's host surged after and on top of him. Thrown to the ground, he would

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have been trampled and hacked into carrion but for his superhuman agility.

He writhed to one side, and flung himself into the shadow of the palisade, worse off only for a bruised shoulder; and there lay lurking while the pursuit roared off after his men. Drunk with the lust for blood, the peasants and house-carles gave chase, yelling savagely. In a few moments they were scattered through the wood, hunting out their fleeing victims.

Sigurd and Hornklofi did not follow on, but stopped at the gate, panting.

"Fighting is all very well," Sigurd grumbled. "It is a man's work; but this running after a handful of bleating sheep in the dark is no game for us."

He stopped, and wiped his red sword on the cloak of a fallen berserk.

"That Solvi may be a butcher and a slayer of the helpless, as men say he is; but he has the stomach of a soldier. Curse these mad fools of peasants! They were so thirsty for blood that they would not let me near him, and so spoiled what might have been a good night's work."

Hornklofi laughed in his throat.

"Look yonder," he said. "No, by the edge of the garth, about three paces off. It is no corpse, for I saw the shimmer of his mail when he moved a little."

Sigurd ran forward, sword in hand; but before he could reach the spot, Solvi sprang to his feet and ran for the lake. He ran well; but Sigurd Stag did not bear his surname for nothing, and overhauled him a good five yards from the brink. He thought to cut the man down from behind, when suddenly Solvi turned and flew at him like a wounded wildcat. Just in time Sigurd raised his shield, and caught the blow on its metal boss.

Hornklofi stood by to see fair play; for this was a single combat between two chiefs, and by the custom of the North no man had a right to interfere with it. Nor was there any one to interfere save himself, for the host was still on the chase, giving tongue lustily.

Solvi fought as he had never fought before, raining blows at his adversary's head, and ever again thrusting with speed and precision. But the Butcher had at last met his match: Sigurd parried every stroke, and matched it with two of his own. Stronger as well as swifter than the Thrandheimer, he beat down Solvi's guard and drew blood three times, once from the left arm, once from the forehead, and once through the steel rings on the right shoulder. Soon Solvi began to give ground, backing slowly toward the lake.

Implacably, Sigurd pressed him, overwhelming hacked shield and weary sword-arm with bitter blows. At last, with a groan of despair, Solvi lowered his guard; Sigurd sprang in, his blade sweeping down for the final stroke—and cleft the air. With a mighty backward bound, Solvi flung himself into the lake, diving deep. When he came to the surface, he was five yards from the shore and swimming fast. Sigurd gazed ruefully after, his useless sword dangling in his hand.

"Well, that ends it," he commented. "I count this day ill-spent."

Hornklofi laughed outright.

"Not altogether," he said, "for I have seen a fight the like of which has not been in Norway since your namesake, Sigurd the Volsung, slew the dragon. Come back to the house and drown your disappointment in a flagon of ale."

"It will take all the ale from here to Thrandheim to drown my disappointment," Sigurd rejoined.

"Well, go as far as you can. At all events, you have disposed of the berserks."

"Not of Haki. Solvi, I think, will not come back. He is a prudent fellow, for all his courage, and knows when he has met a better man. Besides, he will have so much to do to defend himself from Harald that he will have no time for me. But Haki is another bird. He has sworn to destroy me and carry off Gunnhild; and I am sure he will try to do it as soon as he is able."

Hornklofi whistled softly to himself.

"Then I will not stir from here," he announced, "till Harald is back and Haki has fled oversea. You can be no keener to see the color of the cutthroat's blood than I."

Sigurd shook his hand warmly.

"In that case," he answered, "you will have a goodly store of new verses for Harald when he comes again."

TO BE CONTINUED

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THE WELDING

by ROY P. CHURCHILL

Author of "The High String," "Danny takes a Chance," etc.

BOBBY ADAMS climbed the ladder to the *Miami's* bridge, and stood with his back to the flag-locker with his elbows supported behind him. His attitude was one of hopeless dejection. Three times Danny Wallace passed him as he paced the bridge, his long telescope tucked under his arm, and then he stopped abruptly and emitted a single ejaculation, which might be called a questioning grunt, which also had in it something of resignation, a submission to the inevitable, and a resolution that if he must hear some one's troubles, he hoped they would get them out of their system quickly.

"I'm looking for somebody's neck to weep on," said Bobby. "Did you see me trying to drill that bunch of boneheads? They do the monkey drill like they'd all been on a toot, and were stretching their arms to yawn. Old-timer, you and I on the old *Alabama* knew what a home ship was. But this here little floating fortress is going to be some madhouse. Going to be nothing—is right now—and if I had more than six months and a butt to do, I'd jump overboard and try to swim ashore."

"Well," sighed Danny, "I'd have one less trouble if you did. This is about fifteen times you have busted in a new bunch on a ship just goin' into commission. It looks to me like you've lived through it, and that you'd learn to quit hollerin' about it."

"I need sympathy, not a bawling out," complained Adams. "This bunch is awful, and there's so many of 'em, Danny. Why, they don't know enough to take off their shirts when they wash, and they haven't been wearing a uniform long enough for the collar-button mark to wear off their necks."

"Well, get on the job, then," said Danny vehemently. "That's what they rate a bo's'n's mate for. Drill 'em, drill 'em, drill 'em, rub the salt in 'em. Make sailors out of 'em. There's a feller down there now scrubbin' clothes out of hours. Not that that's any crime, but he's wastin' good salt water soap, usin' half a bar to a quart of water."

"Let him go to it," growled the other. "You'd think I was a nursemaid instead of a bos'n's mate."

But despite his words he hastened down the ladder to the duty that Danny had pointed out.

Danny continued his pacing, a little worried frown between his eyes, for conditions on the *Miami* were as deplorable to him as they were to the rest of the small sprinkling of continuous-service men in the ship's crew. The old home ship, the *Alabama*, had been put in ordinary at the navy yard so that her old-style dish-pan fighting-tops could be changed into steel bird-cage military masts, and her secondary battery made uniform, instead of assorted from six-inch to three-inch guns.

Of the *Alabama's* crew some had been paid off, the majority scattered to other ships in commission, and a few, including Danny Wallace and Bobby Adams, transferred to the protected cruiser *Miami*, soon to be on her way to a station in the West Indies.

More than once in Danny's experience

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had he seen a green crew, made up largely of recruits, go to a little-visited station and after a year come back fit to take a place in the main fleet under the critical eyes of the navies of the world, but to Danny it seemed that the *Miami's* crew had too small a percentage of seasoned old-timers, full of the sacred traditions, unquestioning loyalty and love of the service, which makes a true sailor, and at times in the last week he had almost doubted that the leaven in the mass would be sufficient.

No hint of this thought escaped his lips. To all complaints he breathed the same assurance which had won through so many trials, and none but the quartermaster, Danny Wallace himself, quite saw through the bluff.

"Pet 'em, coax 'em, drill 'em, drive 'em," was the progressive theory of his advice.

The *Miami* was taking on stores, boxes of bread and canned goods, barrels of oil and kegs of paint, towing lines, rope, bales of blankets, all the thousand and nine things needed for a sailor and his ship. Groups of men were scrubbing at smudges left by the coaling. Everywhere the decks were busy, littered with gear, and not as clean as the decks of a man-o'-war should be. Truly an unwelcome time for visitors, especially such a visitor as Jane Graham, and Danny Wallace must have looked his perplexity as he greeted her at the gangway.

"I'm not a sightseer," she said merrily looking past him at the confused decks. "I came to see Midshipman Graham, my brother."

"I'll get the officer of the deck to send a messenger for him," said Danny with relief.

He had been wondering just which one of the sweating, badly uniformed recruits or the hard-working petty officers he could ask to take this white-gowned, pretty and smiling young guest on the regular sightseer's tour of the ship.

The officer of the deck relieved his suspense. The girl knew him.

"Permission to see my brother a minute, Mr. Brown," she asked.

"Certainly, Miss Graham, he is forward somewhere. I will have him called."

"Don't bother," said the girl, "let me go. I can see you are terribly busy," and stepping past the two men, she walked forward.

John Breen, the boatswain, with the men of the forward divisions was overhauling the ground tackle. Long lengths of heavy anchor chain had been roused out of the locker, and lay faked along the decks. Midshipman Courtenay Hill Graham stood by in immaculate uniform while Breen toiled with his unskilled helpers at the chain. The extent of Midshipman Graham's assistance was to occasionally prod the heavy iron links with a shining boot, and offer unneeded suggestions as to its handling. He was officially in charge of the work.

John Breen had laid aside his uniform coat and worked in a pair of rust-streaked trousers and a torn shirt open at the throat and rolled to the elbows. A red smear streaked one of his muscular arms where a slipping chain hook had struck him.

Jane Graham came up behind the group at work. The men were hoisting another bight of chain from the locker. Stepping over a length of the chain, she started toward her brother. Just then the hoisting tackle carried away. Breen straightened up with a cry of warning.

"Get your hooks into it, men! Quick!" he cried. The heavy chain, once given impetus, had started back into the locker with a roar. Half a dozen men who had secured holds were dragged across the deck.

"Let go!" ordered Breen. "Get a hold further back, all of you, and hold on!"

THEN he saw Jane Graham. She was directly in the path of the flying chain, confused, uncertain which way to run. Her brother and half a dozen others shouted to her. Only John Breen acted. Jumping to the danger side of the chain, he picked up the girl, and with her weight in his arms leaped back over the moving links to safety.

"Thank you," said the girl gratefully as soon as she caught her breath. "That was quick work."

"I'm afraid I've spoiled your dress," apologized John Breen, and turned very red as the girl noticed the print of his rust-stained arm round her waist.

Jane smiled up at him.

"Never mind the dress," she said, now perfectly at ease, "it will wash. But it was stupid of me not noticing the chain. I belong in the Navy, too. My brother——"

"But you belong at the other end of the deck, Jane," interrupted Graham. "You have no business forward."

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He spoke sharply without apparent attempt to control his impatience. The girl's eyes flashed and her lips formed a spirited reply, but remembering in time how many of the group would hear this difference between an officer and his sister, she left the words unspoken, and turned to John Breen.

"I want to thank you again for acting and not scolding. I came to tell my brother of a dance auntie is giving at the hotel tonight, and I wish you would come also to show that you forgive me for being in the way at a busy time. You will, won't you, Mr. ——?"

"Breen," said the boatswain, "John Breen."

John Breen would have promised the girl anything. He found himself saying, "Yes," without realizing what her question had been. He had his own way with men. Not one of the two forward divisions but respected and obeyed him. But a girl like this! Slender, cool, immaculate, with eyes and lips smiling, and little wind-blown curls whipping her firm tanned cheeks. He was at a loss for words or action which meant denial. For such a girl John Breen knew only one course—to give, obey, serve. And so he promised that he would come to the dance that night.

"Thank you," smiled the girl, and started aft toward the gangway.

Her brother overtook her in half a dozen steps, threw a command over his shoulder to "turn to and bear a hand with the chain," and then fell into step beside her.

At the gangway the girl turned and caught John Breen watching her. Embarrassed, he turned to the work in hand, but not before she had waved to him and he had acknowledged by lifting his cap.

"Jane!" spoke her brother sharply. "What do you mean by encouraging that fellow? He is only a boatswain. Only last year he was a common sailor."

"What quick promotion!" retorted the girl. "In a year or two more he will be ranking you."

"I guess not," said her brother with conviction. "That kind get so far and no further. Technically, they know their business, but an officer has to be a gentleman, and they fail to qualify."

"All the same," said the girl as a parting shot, as she stepped into the launch, "I have invited him to the dance, and I hope he comes."

And that is why, when Courtenay Graham returned to the forecastle, he made the afternoon one long to be remembered by his nagging interference. This attitude of superiority and patronage strengthened Breen's determination to go to the dance at any cost, feeling that in no other way could he so effectively get back at Graham. Besides that, he had promised, and stronger than all he wanted to see Jane Graham again.

Breen found the dance less of a trial and more of a pleasure than he had thought. In his dress suit, nothing marked him as different from the other officers. Most of them were from other ships, and none of the girls that he asked found excuses for not dancing with him.

"Are you having a good time?" asked Jane during their third dance.

"Splendid," said Breen, "but I wonder how many would cut me if they knew I was a bo's'n!"

"Not many," she assured him, "and besides, you will take the examination for a commission when you get back from this cruise."

John Breen went home to his ship that night happy and contented. Even Courtenay Graham had let him alone at the dance, and the evening had lacked even one unpleasant happening. Accepted among the officers as one of them, he had held his own socially, and more than ever was he determined to get ahead, after Jane's confidence in him.

Then during the three days that followed, while the ship completed preparations for her trip, it was borne in upon him gradually, but in such a way that there was no mistaking its meaning, that Courtenay Graham knew of his ambition to win a promotion, and because of the dislike he held for him, meant to do all in his power to keep him from having it.

When at last the *Miami* steamed south toward her station, the confusion and discontent was little better than while she lay in port. Nothing about the ship seemed to fit. The men were new in their jobs, the gear was stiff and awkward to handle, and constant comparisons were made between the well-organized ships which the men had left, and the discomfort and lack of orderliness in their new home.

"Even the bo's'n's got a grouch on," complained "Hoot" Harris to Danny Wallace. "I knew him when he was chief on

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the *Texas*, and he was a prince. But now all he thinks about is watching that stuck-up division officer somebody wished on us. They walk around each other like a couple of strange bulldogs."

"Well, Hoot," admonished Danny Wallace, "to hear you talk you would think the three hash marks on your sleeve was smears of red lead. Don't you know it takes more than runnin' up the commission pennant to get a ship a-goin'? Three months on the station, and everything will be as happy as pay-day."

"Pray let it be so," mocked Hoot. "Only three days at sea, and eating deep-sea grub, like the galley and the bake shop has been washed overboard."

"Look here," scolded Danny Wallace, "I want the bunch of you to listen to me. We're petty officers on this ship, and it's up to us to make it a fit place to live in. This is no week-end picnic. There's a couple of years ahead of us. This big bunch of rookies must be licked into shape. Growlin' makes the job harder."

"Danny is right," said Bobby Adams. "We've either got to do all the work ourselves, or teach the others how. Let's quit cussin' our luck and get at it."

The first real test came the next day, when one of the recruits fell overboard while cleaning a boat. The cry "Man overboard!" ran around the decks, shrill as the cry of fire on a quiet street at night, and found the badly drilled life-boat crew unprepared for the emergency. Half of them were below decks, and did not get up in time, and the other half were so excited that they did not know what to do.

Courtenay Graham lowered one boat-fall and John Breen the other. Adams, Harris, Hull and Williams, all old-timers, found places in the boat and Danny Wallace took the steering oar. John Breen slid down the forward boat-fall as the boat struck the water. Graham did not follow, though the boat was shy a man. Fortunately the man overboard was a good swimmer, even if he was a poor seaman, and the boat picked him up safely. The life-buoy had stuck in its cradle.

"Good work, men," approved the captain when the boat was safely hoisted, "but we will heave to for half an hour every day and have life-boat drill. Only four men of the regular crew seemed to hear the signal."

"Our esteemed superior with the lily-white hands failed to show," spoke Breen with contempt as he and Danny Wallace walked forward. "Nobody is too good to shin down a rope when 'Man overboard!' comes."

"Give him time," reasoned the old quartermaster. "There's some things about the service which only the years teach. He may beat you to it next time."

ONCE on her station the *Miami* ran into stiff duty. She made one of half a dozen ships which policed the island of Haiti, and rarely did her anchor stay in one place more than a week at a time. Revolutions had to be checked, customs collected, smugglers chased, while all the time the ship herself fought her own inefficiency, and put down disloyalty within. The brigs were full of offenders against the rules, and every morning the deck court was busy. The officers drew apart into a stern, uncompromising group, and the men replied in sullen evasions and black looks.

Danny Wallace grew less hopeful of the outcome, and with the other petty officers put the matter up to John Breen.

"We're gettin' nowhere," Danny complained. "The men aft ought to let up a little. A new bunch never takes kindly to discipline, and the brand they are givin' out is so rigid that we old-timers can't stand for it without kickin'."

"I'll do my best," promised Breen, "don't think for a minute that I'm not walking a chalk line myself."

When the first lieutenant came forward that morning Breen made his plea for the experienced men on the ship. It was badly timed. The first lieutenant had caught three men smoking out of hours as he came up the deck. There was a deck bucket of soiled scrub and wash clothes in soak badly hidden by a locker, and though it was nine o'clock, half the men were not in uniform. Worst of all, Midshipman Courtenay Graham heard also what Breen had to say. This fact made Breen's voice a shade too imperative and insistent to suit the already frayed nerves of the first lieutenant.

"No!" he cried angrily. "No! Get the ship looking something like a man-o'-war first. Forward here it looks like a transport. Tell them for me that all they will get is more discipline, more extra duty,

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until this ship ceases to be a disgrace to the Navy."

Breen's face flamed, yet he was too game a man to flinch. His heels and his teeth clicked.

"Aye, aye, sir," he said, but before the first lieutenant could give him his morning orders, Courtenay Graham had interrupted.

"If you will pardon me, Mr. Bishop," he said, "one cause of the trouble forward is that Mr. Breen, the bo's'n, does not understand the duties of an officer. He is entirely in sympathy with the men. His influence is largely responsible for the conditions forward."

John Breen had been in many a scrap, and the more fiery the test, the colder he grew. If Graham expected an outburst which would result in his losing his warrant, he was mistaken. John Breen looked at him, and his gray eyes turned to flashing dots of hate, but what he said was even, careful.

"What are the morning's orders?" he asked, ignoring Graham, and the first lieutenant dismissed him with a wave of the hand.

"Orders be hanged!" he said. "Get this part of the ship in some kind of shape." And as Breen turned away he had the satisfaction of hearing also, "And I'll thank you, Mr. Graham, not to give advice about the running of the ship unless it is asked."

Courtenay Graham swallowed hard, fought back the bitter words that came to his lips, and in the end took his medicine a little less cheerfully than had Breen, getting as a net result of his morning's effort only an increased hatred toward the boatswain, and a feeling that John Breen hated him a little more intensely than before.

The first lieutenant was quick-tempered and autocratic, but also an experienced judge of men and their actions. What he saw that morning on the forecastle, together with Midshipman Graham's attempts to discredit Boatswain John Breen, set him to thinking. The first and foremost aim in the first lieutenant's mind was the good of his ship, and he was fighting with every resource he knew to make conditions better. His tour of inspection took him to the bridge, and to Danny Wallace. He knew that the old quartermaster was an ally to be counted on, and that he would talk more freely at his station than if he had been summoned to a stateroom.

"What's the trouble between Mr. Graham and Mr. Breen?" he asked when he had beckoned Danny into the chart-room and detailed a signal boy to watch for signals on the bridge.

Danny knew the first lieutenant. Give him three weeks on any ship with an executive officer, and Danny would know half his very thoughts in advance.

"The trouble started almost from the first day," he answered, glad of a chance to talk plainly where he knew it would do the most good. "The two men are built different. One comes from the ranks up, and the other started at the top, and still has the ways of a sailorman to learn," and then Danny told him about the anchor chain and Graham's sister.

"Their row is muddling up the whole first division," stormed the first lieutenant, "and the first division of a ship runs that ship. Something has to be done about it. You say that Graham's sister writes to Breen and that she had him to a dance?"

"Yes," said Danny. "Usually I'm not a tattlin' old woman, and it's only for the good of the Service that I'm tellin' you. The bo's'n wants a commission, and he's learnin' the ways of an officer fast."

"What about Mr. Graham?"

"Just this," said Danny, "and if it isn't a just criticism, I'll go to the brig for it. He don't understand the men, can't see their view-point, and don't try to get it. John Breen especially he's sore on, because Breen's ambitious."

"Thanks," said the first lieutenant. "If things don't get better in a week, I'll have them transferred to different ships."

The first lieutenant waited for an answer to this, and seeing what was expected, Danny took his eyes from the chart of the Caribbean on the wall and made bold to answer.

"Let 'em fight it out," he suggested. "They're both good men. To transfer 'em would be dodgin' the issue."

"It is the talk of the ward-room that you are a sea lawyer," smiled the first lieutenant, "but if it breaks up the ship's company I'm going to do just what you say," and the first lieutenant stamped out, went down the ladder, and took a station in the forecastle, from which he set Midshipman Courtenay Hill Graham and Bo's'n John Breen

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so busy at the task of putting the fore part of the ship in order that for half an hour they forgot their personal differences under the rapid fire of orders and caustic criticisms from their superior officer.

"I'll teach you how to run a division, if I have to," was his parting shot as he marched aft.

THE harbor of Christobal was not a pleasant place for ships to lie. The anchorage was deep, with a rocky bottom, and while the crescent of the bay was well defined, it faced the wrong way for the West Indies. Even in fair weather the water was rough and lumpy from the whirling mixture of current which ran in from the open sea. In bad weather the wind added its power to the confusion, and turned the bay into a whirling waste of white-capped waves, each one seeming to run at a different angle to the others.

Officers and men dreaded the place, but with a company of marines ashore guarding the public buildings and the customs, two ships of the fleet at a time were detailed for a month's stay, each ship looking forward eagerly to the time when the anchor would go to a more pleasant place.

The *Miami* and the *Castrina* had been on duty for a week, during which time, for a wonder, the weather behaved. Officers and first-class men were allowed daylight shore liberty, and gradually some of the tension began to relax. The drills became less awkward, a baseball team was hinted, and a measure of pride in their ship began to show itself in the deportment of the men. None of this good seemed to reach the feud between Midshipman Graham and John Breen.

Several times the first lieutenant's decision to "let them fight it out" almost came to a physical demonstration, but though sorely tempted, John Breen kept his hands off his enemy, knowing that it meant the loss of his chance to be promoted if he came to blows with Graham. The fact that Graham tried openly to provoke him made Breen doubly careful of his temper.

"I'll get a chance at him yet," he confided to Danny Wallace. "I've taken so much that the little whippersnapper thinks he's got my number."

To which the old quartermaster, wily diplomat that he was, always made answer that a time of reckoning would surely come.

During the good weather Danny Wallace put his name down for liberty one morning, but after a look at the barometer, he changed his mind and decided to stay on board. By noon his fears were justified. Both ships hoisted their recall flags, and sent in boats to bring off the liberty parties, but before they could put off they were signaled to tie up alongside the dock. Already it was unsafe in the bay for small boats and launches. Straight out from sea a wild storm had blown in.

All but two of the *Miami's* boilers were being overhauled. The spell of fine weather had seemed a good time for the job, and the men below needed the drill. When the sudden storm came it caught her unprepared. The first lieutenant sent rush orders below to get all the steam possible in the shortest time, and ordered the boatswain to let go the port anchor and veer to the forty-five-fathom shackle.

"Connect up and get the sheet-anchor ready to let go," he shouted to Courtenay Graham above the howling wind. "We will have to count on our ground tackle and it's up to you and Breen forward here."

Then he hurried below for a report on the boilers.

On the bridge Danny Wallace had fixed a point ashore in line with two stanchions, and as the ship rolled and plunged against her long anchor chains he watched anxiously for drift. He was already wet to the skin, for when the sharp bow plunged into the onrushing waves the spray leaped in glittering, wind-driven showers far over the bridge, and almost aft to the quarter-deck.

Danny had ordered his two signal boys inside the chart-room for protection, much to their disgust, for they loved Danny Wallace like a father, and wanted to be with him in the thick of things, and now one of them ventured forth clad in oilskins, to offer a flapping suit of the stiff yellow clothing to Danny. Danny shook his head.

"I couldn't be any wetter," he said. "Give it to your side-kicker. Then get below as quick as you can and report to the officer of the deck that the ship is driftin' three feet a minute."

Five minutes later the captain and first-lieutenant were on the bridge and between the wave-shocks the throb of the propellors came pulsing through the ship, with a steady drive when the stern was down but racing wildly when the bow plunged under a wave.

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"That should hold her," said the first lieutenant hopefully. "We will have another boiler connected up in half an hour."

"I'd let go the sheet anchor and veer thirty fathoms more on the two bowers," advised the captain. "We are yet to feel the worst of this blow."

Led by John Breen and Courtenay Graham, the first division crawled forward to carry out the captain's orders. Not one of them held back. The common danger had drawn them together with a tie as close and strong as years of discipline would have given.

There was plenty of need to hang on constantly and to help one another, for the wind tore at them, the plunging bow writhed and snapped under their feet, and each curling wave threw its crest of blinding spray into their faces. Now and then a wave larger than the rest would come aboard and sweep hissing down the inclined deck. Then it was that the men clung to stanchions and hatch combings, and hauled one another from the scuppers, and always John Breen and Courtenay Graham led and directed them.

Finally, the work done, they crept aft again, to shelter behind the smoke-stacks and deck-house, feeling for one another a new bond of sympathy and a new respect. All but Graham and Breen. These two stood as far apart as ever. Graham's rain-clothes were of the latest cut and texture, while Breen stood capless, with bare feet, wet to the skin. Each looked at the other with no yielding of their obstinate conviction, but withal both a little puzzled.

The men's rest was short-lived. The starboard chains had been veered to the bitter end, but either because of a rusty shackle, or because the port chain, shorter than the other, took an unequal strain, at a snap on the ground tackle a little stronger than usual, coming when the chain was almost taut, the port chain let go at the sixty-fathom shackle.

THERE was no need for the first lieutenant and the captain to send word to the men. Breen and Graham were already on their way forward, followed by so many men of the deck divisions that they had to send half of them back. On the bridge the first lieutenant had signaled the engine-room to get every turn out of the propellers that the two boilers could make.

If they could steam ahead and ease the strain on the starboard anchor, that part of the port chain which was still aboard could be shackled on and both chains veered again until the strain was more equal between the two remaining anchors. As it was, the sheet-anchor was riding to thirty fathoms, and the remaining bower to a hundred and twenty, with not another fathom in the locker.

In such a gale the shorter chain would have snapped at once, if given an equal strain, and so the *Miami* fought for her life with the one anchor, while the men worked frantically on the rolling, water-swept decks to heave in the broken chain, test it for strained links, and finally shackle its end to the other chain.

Two men had been struck down by the flying links and carried to the sick bay, when John Breen shouted to Courtenay Graham:

"Watch the sheet chain and stand by to ease her. I'll do the job myself."

Graham meant well, but Breen's tone angered him. It was absurd that a boatswain give him orders. Also he lacked experience with ground tackle. As Breen straightened up from his task, the ship lurched to the battering impact of a wave, snapped sideways against the shorter chain, and with a crash parted at the hawse-pipe.

"Carelessness!" cried Breen. "Poor seamanship! You ought to try peeling spuds."

Graham did not hear the words, but Breen's look of disgust and his moving lips told him enough. Before he could retort, the first lieutenant was between them.

"Veer!" he bellowed. "What are you waiting for? This one anchor is all we have between us and the rocks. Run her out to the bitter end. With the engines to help, it may hold us. What's the matter you didn't veer on the sheet chain sooner, Graham?"

"The bridge issues orders, I obey them," answered Graham sullenly.

But the first lieutenant did not hear him. He had already turned to line up some object on shore to see if the ship would drift or hold when the remaining chain that Breen had shackled on was out.

The extra sixty fathoms of chain helped the *Miami* to hold on. As the ship plunged backward from the impact of the waves it

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had to lift the long bight of heavy chain before it brought up short, which evened the strain on the anchor, and eased somewhat the vicious jerk as the chain straightened. But seas such as even that storm-swept bay had never known were in store for the *Miami*.

They commenced to roll in now in swift succession, one great mountainous battering-ram after another. Their tops curved into cascades of rolling foam and spray, which volleyed across the decks as if shot from a gun, and their bases, smooth and glassy green, like polished agate, were fully as hard in their fierce assault as unyielding stone.

The *Miami* was perilously near the rocks. In veering to the long chain she had drifted back until when the waves passed her and broke with the crash of a broadside against the cliffs, the noise of them made speaking almost impossible. It was a fearsome sight. The steel-gray masses drove in endlessly to strike, writhe backward and strike again with undiminished impetus and velocity. Men and officers stood together and waited. If the anchor held until steam was made, there was a chance to get out. If not, the ship was lost.

First they looked seaward at the procession of waves, and then behind them at the waiting rocks, and instinctively they drew closer to one another, lost some of the criticism of peace and comfort, and gained the unity and consideration of hardship and danger.

Danny Wallace first saw the big wave coming from his position on the spray-drenched bridge. He could not shout, so he wigwagged to the forecastle, and pointed seaward. This monster wave marched along, a towering mountain of moving water, with its front straight up and down and no sign of its crest breaking over.

"Hold fast!" he signaled.

As the wave neared the ship it gathered speed. The shallowing bottom and the push of the wind commenced to bend its top forward. As it reached the ship it broke upon it with the force of a landslide. The *Miami* was smothered, overwhelmed. The anchor chain leaped from the water in a straight quivering line, wreathed in spray, the wind tearing the water from the straining links.

Every man on deck held on with both hands and held his breath as well, as the ship shook herself free of the tons of water on her decks. Then with the chain still taut another wave struck her, and the full force of it was too much for any ground tackle. A shackle sprung apart, and the end of the broken chain came whipping back with all of its weight almost to the ship, as if the sea had flung aside a useless plaything.

The *Miami* lunged furiously shoreward, broadside to the sea. Another giant wave lifted her on its crest, carried her forward with the speed of a soaring bird, and flung her like a monstrous toy on an outer reef a hundred yards from shore.

The rock wedge on which the *Miami* struck went in so deep that she was held almost on an even keel, and so firmly fixed upon the rocks that the waves which pounded on her weather side hardly moved her. There were a few minutes of confusion, as the men picked themselves up from where the crash had thrown them about the decks, but no panic or hysteria. The *Miami's* ship's company, from a sullen, rule-breaking body of badly disciplined men, had become cool, resourceful, daring, willing to follow their officers, or their own initiative if the officers failed through any emergency.

Danny Wallace on the bridge ran to the engine-room speaking-tube when the ship went adrift. His commanding officer nodded him a signal.

"Ship's adrift!" he shouted. "Look out for yourselves below there."

Then he relinquished the tube to the captain, who, a little less nimble, had started to give the warning signal.

"Wait for nothing!" added the captain. "All hands up from below on the run!"

Before he could say more the ship struck and the two men were thrown to the deck, saving themselves from a fall from the bridge by holding to stanchions.

"Are you hurt?" asked Danny Wallace when the ship settled and the two scrambled to their feet.

"No," said the captain, "but get every man on deck that is able to help, and bring out the fire-room and engine-room gangs."

DOWN a long narrow passageway already filled with smoke and steam, Danny Wallace, John Breen and Courtenay Graham found themselves working side by side. One of the big steam-

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pipes had burst at the shock, and dozens of scalded men had to be passed along the line of rescuers up into the open air.

Thinking only of the safety of the ship and of other lives than their own, the firemen, oilers and water-tenders had stuck to their posts when the warning came from above, and were opening exhaust valves, hauling fires, creeping about half stifled in the murk to do their bit before they sought safety in the free air on deck. Some of these men were burned. Some fell as they searched for valves, and these, as well as the badly hurt, the men of the deck force were saving.

All the time the water was creeping higher and higher, and the rescuers had not stopped to see in their hurried run below that the ship could only settle so far. For all they knew, she might turn turtle and sink at any moment. It was quieter down there. The sound of the waves against the side was deadened, and gradually the hiss of escaping steam and cooling cinders grew less. With the silence the strain on the nerves became greater. Courtenay Graham suddenly found himself cold and wet and afraid.

"I think that's all," he said weakly. "Let's get out of here."

"Listen!" said Breen. "Somebody's groaning over there. There are more down here."

"We are on the end of the line," said Danny. "It's up to us to find all the hurt and get them out."

Thus braced, Graham worked on, but his nerve was going. He suffered intense physical pain. He had wrenched his foot in a torn deck-plate, his hands were blistered and his throat parched, but worse than bodily suffering was the feeling of fear which set him a-quiver at each unexpected noise and made him want to run away from this black hole of death and suffering.

The men were working in water almost to their knees, and after the first confusion from the breaking steam-pipe, with its toll of scalded men, the fire-room force rallied to their work of hauling the fires before the water reached them, letting the deck force look for the hurt and dead. By the light of the hissing embers and that which came down the ventilators, it was plain to see that the water was rising, despite the assurances from above that the *Miami* was fast on the rocks.

The side of the ship where Graham, Breen and Danny Wallace worked was the low side, and as the ship rocked from the pound of the waves, the confined water in the double bottoms gurgled and eddied around stanchions and deck-plates, and with each slight roll came perilously near to the still glowing fire-boxes.

Danny Wallace had just found a coal-passer sitting helplessly against a stanchion, too weak from his burns to ask for help, when a brawny fireman, busy with his long-handled rake, his face burned red from hot steam, and his undershirt soaked with sweat and ashes, called to him,

"Get them out quick as you can, this boiler is adrift. I can feel her give every time she rolls. If the ship heels over much more, she'll slide out on us."

"Who else is hurt down here?" demanded Breen impatiently.

"Wilkins, my other coal-passer, is somewhere, but bear a hand, bear a hand! We've got to get out of this place quick!"

"Forget it," growled Danny Wallace.

Just then the ship gave a vicious lurch. The men jumped aside to escape a deluge of hot coals.

"There she goes! Didn't I tell you so?" shrieked the overwrought fireman.

But his prophecy was wrong. The boiler held after all, and Danny Wallace and Breen picked up their man and carried him to the foot of the ladder, where other hands helped him on deck. Then they went back for Wilkins.

"Where's Graham?" asked Danny Wallace.

"He took the fireman's word for it and ran," answered Breen contemptuously.

"Not so fast," answered the older man. "Good men have done the same thing. Maybe you remember some of them. Let's find this poor devil Wilkins, and get out of here ourselves."

"Wilkins," said a voice. "Who wants Wilkins?"

And the figure of the coal-passer loomed before them in the gloom. He was unhurt.

"The last fire's hauled, and everybody's out," he announced. "Let's get out before something else busts."

ON DECK the waves were still breaking over the *Miami's* side, and wedging her more firmly on the rocks, but no more of the monster waves which had wrecked her were coming in,

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and Danny Wallace's practised eye saw that the worst was over. Somehow a line had been put ashore, and soon a steel hawser was rigged to one of the masts, and secured to the nearest cliff on shore. Over this line in a breeches buoy the men were being taken off, wounded first, followed by the unhurt, with the equipment necessary to make camp.

The hours until dark were crowded full of hard work for John Breen and Danny Wallace, and for every member of the crew, men and officers. The first lieutenant's voice had lost a certain querulous note of impatience, which the men had learned so well during the time that the *Miami* had been in commission. The orders came in a steady stream, but were kind, persuasive, as man to man, and brother to brother, and the crew obeyed without complaint or grumble, though each man was ready to drop from exhaustion.

No longer was the *Miami's* crew a crowd of unfit, rebellious and inexperienced novices, but a compact working unit, going on and on past the limit of endurance through their nerve and loyalty.

"The ship is a wreck," said the first lieutenant to the captain, "but the Service has something far better. With this crew I would go into any fight, any danger, and I know I could count on every man."

When at last Danny Wallace and John Breen reached shore they found tents pitched, sentries stationed, supper cooking, and in the hospital tent they found Courtenay Graham. He beckoned to them with his good hand, the other being in splints beside him.

"I want to see you two," he said, "and get something off my mind." His words came slowly but with evident relief. "Down below there I lost my nerve, was plain afraid, and found out that sometimes in a pinch an enlisted man has more courage than I."

Graham spoke with an effort, and the two men were embarrassed at the struggle which the proud Courtenay Graham was making in his confession.

"There now, that'll do," soothed Danny Wallace. "Lots of good men have done that. Why, Breen here, when he was an apprentice boy——"

"But I ran away," interrupted Courtenay Graham.

"That's all right," said Breen, putting out his hand and finding the other's. "I've done it myself, and Danny has too, if there was anybody old enough to tell on him. Besides, you were hurt. Look how you are all bunged up."

"I didn't get all that down there," said Graham. "Somebody had to take a light line ashore. Since you weren't there to beat me to it, Breen, I did it myself. After what had happened below I was desperate and didn't care much what happened."

"We'll take your word for it that you didn't care," said Danny Wallace. "Any man that'll go overboard among that bunch of snaggle-tooth rocks with the sea that's runnin', wouldn't care."

The three men were silent for a moment, Breen and Graham taking stock of each other. Graham spoke first.

"If you're willing to let bygones be bygones, I withdraw certain personal objections I have had to your being an ensign."

Breen hesitated. It was his turn to dig deep into his soul for things close to his heart.

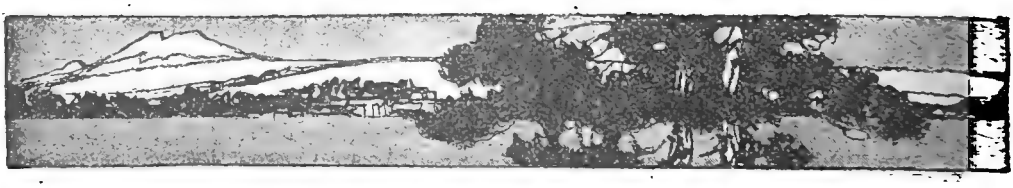
"Do you mean your sister Jane?" he asked.

"Everything," answered Graham.

"Then," said Breen joyously, "if ever I am lucky enough to get a commission, I hope I may be half as much an officer and a gentleman as you are."

Danny Wallace broke the awkward tenseness which followed.

"Bless you, my children," he said, so solemnly that the two men sidestepped the depth of meaning in it, and laughed at him.



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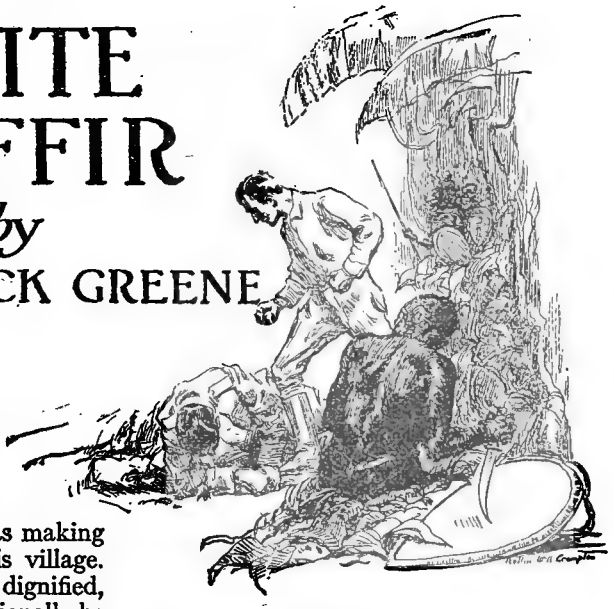
THE WHITE KAFFIR

by L. PATRICK GREENE



Author of "The Snakes of Zori."

IT WAS time for the evening meal in the village of Lomboso, a Barotse chief; and he, as was his wont, was making the daily tour of inspection of his village. A portly man was Lomboso, dignified, bearing well his sixty years. Occasionally he would stop to talk to one as old as himself, exchanging reminiscences, as old men will, of the days when men were men.

Some five hundred souls owed their allegiance to Lomboso, and he and they were proud of their independence. When the rest of the Barotse nation swore allegiance to the English Government, Lomboso refused to "come in" under the British rule, though he was glad to partake of the benefits of that rule.

Twice a small force of British troops—the Rhodesian Mounted Police—had been sent to collect taxes from Lomboso's people and to take Lomboso prisoner. He had evaded them—once by crossing over the river into German territory, and once into Portuguese—for his village was situated on that part of the Zambesi River which forms a boundary between the three districts. Also men had been sent to win him by persuasion—and had failed. And so he and his people had no little cause to be proud. For ten years he had, as their saying put it "barked for himself" and his people "knew not the leash."

This evening tour, which was rather one of good comradeship than inspection, always stopped short at the gate of the *scherm*—the thorn fence which encircled the village—and never did he approach the little hut which was just outside. Then he would return to his own hut and his head wife, seeing him coming, would give orders for the preparation of the evening meal.

Sounds of singing and laughter heralded the return of the young maidens from the river, water gourds balanced on their heads; a merry care-free group bantering each other as they walked, pretending to chase some naked little picaninny, laughing in glee at his happy shrieks. But as they passed the little hut just outside the *scherm* the sounds of laughter changed to notes of contempt.

"Hi! You dog! Art hungry for thy meal? Have patience yet a little while. Thy turn will come when the other dogs are fed."

"Better join that cleanlier brother of thine, the wild pig, and root for thy food!"

"Ask that black cow thy wife, to cut thy long hair, less a vulture mistake it for a weed and use it for a nest."

"Or perchance Imbuzi, the goat, will have words with thee thinking thou hast robbed him."

And they passed on.

The object of these remarks was a man—"Umglubu the Pig" they called him—who sat in the door of the hut. He was naked save for a loin cloth of greasy goat skins. He was dirty, filthy dirty. His long mud-colored hair and beard hung down nearly to his waist. His eyes were pale and watery. He had the appearance of a man who had once been powerful, but his form was now bent and prematurely old.

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At first you would have said that he was one of those unfortunates to be met wherever the white men come in contact with the black—the half-caste. But his features had no negroid characteristics. The thin aquiline nose, well-formed lips, and high forehead showed plainly that he was a white man, more unfortunate than the half-caste—a white kaffir.

Little cared he for the jests of the maidens but sat gazing vacantly.

After the girls came the men, back from the hunt.

"See! the Pig sits," said one.

"Hush! Perchance the great one dreams."

"Of what, brother? That he will one day be a man like unto us?"

And they passed on.

Then came the wives, returning from their hard toil in the corn crops and just behind them the small boys with the goats. All had a word of contempt for the silent man.

One, a seven-year-old, a little bolder than the rest, ran up and spat at him.

After all had passed the man rose as though to follow, but he was called back by a big gross black woman who now appeared in the opening of the hut. Her coarse features and facial adornments showed that she was not of the Barotse tribe.

"Whither goest thou, dog?"

He turned cowering as though one expecting a blow.

"To the village. I wish to speak with the men!"

"Fool! Dost thou think that they will hold speech with thee?"

"Nevertheless, I wish to go. Mayhap they will talk of one they call—" he spoke hesitatingly—"Dinabantu."

"First eat thy meal, then go."

A GOOD hour later he made his way slowly to the council place. The children were asleep, for it was now long past sundown, and he was spared their jests. He purposely evaded the fire 'round which the women were sitting. Reaching the council place he found all the men assembled 'round the council fire.

The chief and his advisers sat a little apart from the rest; the old men formed one group, the young men another. The leaping flames lit up the black forms like statues of polished ebony.

It was on the group of young men that Umglubu's eyes rested, their fine physique, muscles rippling under their skins, easy grace in every movement. Not one but could trek forty miles between sunrise and sunset and be ready for more on the morrow. He felt a desire to join this group, a feeling back in his mind that he was their superior, that they should bow to his will.

They were singing and it seemed somehow that he knew the words—not in itself strange, for most nights they sang that same song; but this time it had other associations of days long past.

See! they are coming,
Tusks of them gleaming,
Elephants, strangers,
Spoiling our land!
Au—u—a!
We eat them.

Come and behold us,
Sons of the Zulu!
Hark to the singing,
The singing of spears!
Zzi! Zzi! Zzi!

His blood coursed quickly through his veins and he drew himself erect. They started the last verse. He tried to join in with them.

See there Uzwidi
Leading our Impis,
Gallant and mighty,
Strong as a mountain.
See Ulunbunya
Strong as a mountain,
Killing the strangers.
Haste to the slaughter! Kill! Kill!

The chant ended. He stepped forward, coming into the circle of light. Suddenly his presence was noted by Lomboso.

"Au! dog! what dost thou here?"

His form shrank. He once more became Umglubu, the Pig. The chief repeated his question and Umglubu faltering answered—

"I came, chief, hoping that perchance one would speak of Dinabantu."

"A likely tale! What hast thou to do with such as Dinabantu? Rather hast thou come to escape the evil tongue of that wife of thine. But since thou art here, sit, and perchance thy wish may be fulfilled."

Then from the group of young men came the dry:

"Yea, Lomboso Chief, tell us of that one. Tell us the story of the judgment of Dinabantu."

"Well, so it was. Six head of cattle were

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stolen from Melefe and he made complaint to Dinabantu, who at once asked his spirits to point out the thief to him. But his spirits were asleep or tired and only answered that the thief was one of six men. These six then Dinabantu summoned to the place of judgment.

"Each one he asked, 'Was it thou?'

"And each one answered, '*Icona Inkosi.* No, Chief; it was not I.'

"Once again the Great One communed with his spirits, and this time the spirits answered that one of the six was the thief and that the other five knew the thief. Then Dinabantu asked them, 'Dost thou know who is the thief?' And they answered, 'No, Chief, we do not know.'

"Then Dinabantu took down the Stick of Judgment, the *sjambok*, the whip of rhinoceros hide, and said, 'It is not meet that I beat ye, my people. But there is an evil spirit among ye; that do I beat.'

"Twenty lashes did each of the six receive—and mark ye, Dinabantu was a powerful man. Once again he asked, 'Was it ye?' And they answered, 'No, Inkosi.'

"Thus they spoke—the thief fearing the more dreadful punishment that is the lot of a thief, and the five fearful of the thief for he was a rich and powerful man.

"Then spake Dinabantu, 'The evil spirit seems not to hearken unto my voice; therefore I order ye to drive out the evil one from among ye!

"Then he gave the whip into the hand of one of the men bidding him beat the next one. Fifty lashes he counted; then it was the beaten one's turn to beat. And so each of the six was beaten. One hundred lashes in all they each had before the evil spirit left the thief, crying out in a loud voice, 'It was I, Inkosi.'

"Then Dinabantu dressed their wounds, and gave all to drink of the hot coffee, save only the thief. He was ordered to return the stolen cattle and two others beside.

"Ou! that was indeed a man, and his father was a man before him. Would that he were here now and not this one—Umglubu, the Pig."

Then one of the young men who had recently married into the tribe, said:

"Yea, Chief; that story I have heard. Yet do I not know who this great one was. Whence came he and whither did he go?"

"Ow!" said another. "He was a friend of the spirits of the Great-Great; perchance one of the spirits. A little I remember him. He could take out his eye and hold it in the palm of his hand and then put it in the pocket of his coat, and lo! he still had two eyes."

"Tell us more," chorused the young men. "Tell us, as the stranger asked. Whence came Dinabantu? Whither went he?"

"LISTEN then! This great one was sent to us by the Engleesh in order to win us to their king, for mark you, we are a separate people denying the authority of the white men. Also came other white men—the Germor and others from over the river. But they stayed but a little. Saunder, I think his people called him—but we named him Dinabantu, the Just One—came and taught us the wonders of the white people—his people; expounding their laws, healing our sick and administering justice; teaching us good from evil.

"He was with us at the sowing and the reaping, and yet again at the sowing and the reaping—two years he lived among us. And because he was a god among men, full of wisdom, his tongue single, we loved him and hearkened to his teachings. Like the fish could he swim and no buck could outrun him. Ay, he was a man.

"Then I, even I, Lomboso, the Chief, even I who had sworn never to sit in the shadow of the white men, listened to his words and promised to 'come in' with all my people and swear allegiance to his people; thinking that all Engleesh were like unto this one.

"Dinabantu sent a messenger to the Great Kraal of the white men that is by the Water's Great Noise—to Livingstone by the Victoria Falls—saying that all was ready and that the people of Lomboso were ready to throw their spears at the feet of the white men.

"At the feast of maidens came the mouthpiece of the white king. A small man, with no hair on his head; when he walked he strutted like a cockeril so that the children called him by that name—Iquade. That night he spoke to us in the council and his voice was like the bleating of a goat, so that we called him Imbuzi. Thus he spoke:

" 'Oh people of Lomboso—fools! Ye have caused the white king much trouble; for that there must be punishment. Ye shall pay a taxus for every hut—for every wife and for every dog. Moreover men of the

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Kalanga tribe shall be placed in authority over ye.'

"What would ye, my children? There were some of the council who would hear no more, and Dinabantu plucked the Goat by the sleeve, bidding him cease. And I—I would have broken my faith had I not made the promise to Dinabantu.

"Have I said it was the feast of maidens? That night they danced the dance of maidens—the dance that tells of marriage, of childbirth and the beginning of all things—the dance that it is not permitted a man should witness. And well ye know that it is death for a man to see.

"But that one—Imbuzi, the Goat, stole away from his hut and watched, evilly; like a snake he lay in the long grass—and watched. When it was over the maidens saw him and they ran to tell me.

"With rage in my heart I sent for Dinabantu and told him the story.

" 'Dinabantu,' thus I spoke. 'It is finished. My people will not swear allegiance to the Great White King whose mouthpiece is such a one as the Goat!'

"And he — being too full for words—answered not, but his face was sad and troubled.

" 'What,' I said, 'shall we do? My people call for his blood.'

"Then he answered, 'What punishment is meted out to the man who dares witness the maiden's dance?'

"And I answered, 'Thou knowest well, Dinabantu. It is death.'

" 'Lomboso', he said, 'ye have the law. I can say no more as to that one. As for me, my house has fallen down; my heart grows as water within me, and I am weary. Tomorrow I leave ye and ye will see me no more.'

"Next morning with the rising of the sun, repenting somewhat of my judgment, thinking if only Dinabantu could see to it we would yet 'come in,' I went to his hut, but lo! it was empty, and remembering his words, 'Tomorrow I go and ye will not see me again,' I returned to my hut deeply grieving. Neither did I send out scouts to look for him, for in truth it was not good to question the ways of that one."

Breathlessly the Pig had listened to the story of Dinabantu and when all was finished he would have spoken but the harsh barking of the dogs betokened the arrival of strangers.

"See who enter Lomboso's village after the sun has set, and ask their errand," commanded the chief.

BEFORE the order could be carried out, two men entered the council place. White men they were, wearing a khaki uniform. As they came into the firelight it was noticed that they carried revolvers and a gasp of horror and indignation went up from the assembled council, for it is not lawful that one should come armed to the council place of the chief. They halted in the center of the circle and the taller, who seemed to be the leader, said—

"Where is the chief of this village and where his council?"

"First," answered Lomboso, "tell us, rather, who thou art, and what thy business?"

The man laughed.

"That I will tell to the chief and his council and to no other."

"Speak then, for I am the chief—and these my counselors."

"You ask me who I am. Captain von Bergholt—though of a truth, that ye do not understand. But ye shall come to call me—that is, if ye see clearly and eye to eye with me—as the "Great Deliverer," he who brought good feasting. As to my business that is shortly told.

"I come from over the river, the land of the Germans. My people now make war on the English whose slaves ye are—though well I know ye claim to be independent."

"But thou art white, and how can white make war on white?" said Lomboso.

"And thou art black as the Kalanga is black. Yet thou hast made war on the Kalanga—fool! And always thou hast made war for thy own pleasure and profit—that ye might have more cattle, more wives and more young men to tend thy herds. But, mark ye, we make war to save thee. Dost not know the English intend to send all thy young men to work in the mines, while the women they will give to the Kalangas?"

"Au! Will they indeed do this?"

"Yea, it is truth I speak. In thirty days they will come, the night of the new moon, and do all even as I have told. This then is the plan I have to offer thee; that ye join me and my people and we will march down to their big village—Livingstone. They,

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will be surprised and a great victory will be ours, while ye and your women will be saved."

"It may be that your words are true, but though I have sworn never to sit in the shadow of the English, I have always heard that they were an upright race. Their teachers (missionaries) have been with us and they have cured our sick. My mind misgives me, white man. Wilt take thy answer in ten days?"

"In ten days be it. But—and mark this well—should ye decide not to come in with us we will put all thy young men to death, take thy women for our slaves, burn thy village, and thou—thou shalt be impaled on a stake."

All this time Umglubu the Pig, had listened—at first as though not fully comprehending; then as the real import of the German's harangue became clear to him, he hung breathlessly on every word.

"What," he gasped in amazement, "the Germans at war with the English—my people. This then is what they meant when they drank in the old days the toast 'Der Tag.' True at the time of the Boer War, they were, to say the least, unfriendly. But this must mean the whole of Europe in arms. And this is how they would make war—the false friends. And I—have I sunk so low that I can do nothing?"

As the German developed his plan, and he could picture the unbridled license that would follow such a victory as the officer foretold—remembering the massacres of the Matabele rebellion—he would have risen and denounced the speaker. Realizing, however, that his words would be unavailing he remained silent.

Suddenly he was conscious that the German was addressing him in English.

"Come here, you!"

He feigned not to understand.

The captain turned to Lomboso.

"Who is that one? I would speak with him."

"Come here, Umglubu," said the chief.

Slowly the Pig came up to where they were standing.

"Are you English?"

"I do not understand."

"Then who art thou?"

"Men call me Umglubu, the Pig."

The captain would have struck him, but Lomboso held his hand.

"It is not the act of a man to strike one whose soul is gone. This one is harmless. Two years ago he came to my village, a black woman with him, carrying a large box. English he was."

"English he was," scoffed the German, "and Pig they call him. That is good. Well, Pig, we are fighting thy people and they are wallowing in their mire. What, dost not understand? Perchance we will make thee fight thy own people."

At this Umglubu could no longer control his feelings and answered sharply—

"Yes, I will fight and, fighting ram the lie down thy throat."

The German laughed and called to his companion:

"Do you hear that, Lieutenant? The old dog snarls and shows his teeth, but they are yellow with age and suffer from long disuse." Then to Umglubu: "Have a care, dog, lest, when we have worked our will in Livingstone, we do not pull thy fangs—it would be great sport for the natives."

Laughing in glee at his jest, the captain strode off, followed by his lieutenant.

At their departure, a babel of voices broke out in the council, discussing the strange tidings brought by the white men. Most were in favor of throwing in their lot with the Germans. Six of them, four of whom were old men and leaders in the council, and the other two men who had been in the British Native Police, spoke long and earnestly against accepting the offer made by the German.

Said one of the old men:

"Ye know well that the English will not do as these men say. Neither could we win a victory for they are many. Did not Dinabantu tell us that if every hair on a man's head stood for a thousand men, the count would be but begun?"

"If they were to count the hairs on thy head the count would be over ere it began," mocked one of the youngsters.

The council laughed, for the old man was bald.

"Peace," said Lomboso. "It is not time for folly. My mind is divided. When I think of the English I think only of two men—Dinabantu and Imbuzi the Goat. Of which crop is the field sown?"

"Is it permitted that I speak?" said one of the ex-policemen. "Of a truth I am young, and am as a child compared to the wisdom of these old ones, yet I have seen things that they have not seen. I well

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know that the field is sown with seed of Dinabantu. Is it not so, my brother?"

"Aye, he speaks true. Great men they are, just and well loved by those under them," corroborated the other.

But these protests were all swept aside by the rest, fearing the present threatened evil.

"For," said they, "if we refuse to 'go in' who shall save us from the anger of the Germans?"

The Jackal, a crafty-looking man with pig-like eyes—a man who had some following among the younger men—urged the chief to send a messenger to the Germans on the morrow, saying all would be as they desired.

"The Germans are great lords," said he. "With the guns that they will give us we will be powerful, and if we desire to take, who shall say us nay? As for the English, what will they do for us? What have they done? They can not stop the Germans from slaying us, as rest assured they will, if we do not go in with them. The English will not give us guns, for it is an order that we black men may not carry them; neither may we have the *sterrick mouti*, the fire-water. The Germans will give us both. What say ye, Chief! Wilt not send the messenger on the morrow?"

"Are my words as the smoke to be blown away by a puff? In ten days the answer will be given—no more, no less."

And being weary, the chief departed to his hut, but the others remained, eagerly talking over the strange news.

UMGLUBU sat for a while thinking deeply; then with the air of a man who has made a sudden resolve, he rose and went to his hut. It was empty, for the woman was away gossiping.

Eagerly he sought the box of which the chief had spoken—and dragging it outside into the firelight, opened it, displaying sundry white shirts and flannel garments, yellow with age. These he carefully took out until he came to a khaki uniform and a pair of brown polo boots. These too were put one side. Finally he found a portable shaving mirror, a razor, and—in a bachelor's housewife—a pair of scissors. For a long time he gazed at his reflection in the mirror.

"To think," he said, and he spoke English, the words coming hesitatingly, as one speaking a strange language, "that a man could sink so low. The first step was easy—the rest followed. I am dirty. First I must wash, and then—" he laughed—"play the game."

He made as though to try on the tunic but with a muttered, "Not yet," he placed it with the rest of the stuff back in the box. Then, selecting a pair of flannel trousers and a white shirt, he started toward the river.

The way led past the fire 'round which the women were seated singing lullabies, and on past the fires of the old men who were sharing a last pot of beer before retiring. They caught sight of him and called, bidding him join them. But he, all unheeding, passed straight on. Soon the village was left behind and he was treading the well-worn path to the river.

In the deceiving moonlight he went slowly, fearing many things, starting now at his own shadow, now leaping over a piece of dry wood, thinking it a snake. A "go-away bird" suddenly screamed out just in front of him, and he all but turned back. Then putting aside all fears, he marched on. Soon he reached the bank of the river. It was after the Summer rains and the river had reached its highest flood mark. Slowly it flowed, though here and there a flash of silver told of the treacherous currents swirling against the rocks.

From the village behind him came the bleating of goats, the lullabies of the women, the drinking songs of the men. Before him on the distant shore he could dimly make out the huts of the German outpost. Then with a sudden gesture he tore off the greasy goatskin and flung it far behind him into the bush.

Standing for a moment poised on the bank, he plunged into the river, with the grace of an expert, cleaving the water without a splash. He came up gasping and made for the shore. Then having no soap he rubbed himself vigorously with the black mud, talking aloud as he did so.

"Gad! this is great! But I'm out of condition—small wonder! Now to wash this mud off. I wonder if I could do a jack-knife?"

But his effort to double his long-abused body proved unavailing, and he descended with an ignominious flop.

"That's enough for tonight," he laughed,

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spluttering; and climbing on to the bank he trotted up and down, throwing pebbles at a big hippopotamus that was yawning at the moon. When he was dry he drew on the shirt and trousers, rejoicing in the clean smooth feel of them on his body.

"I feel twenty years younger," he exclaimed. "What a —— fool I've been!"

He returned by a roundabout way to his hut and there found the black woman waiting his arrival.

"Where hast thou been, dog?" M'Cabe called to him.

But as she came nearer she drew back in amazement.

"Who art thou, white man? What wonder is this? Thou art Umglubu, my husband, and yet not Umglubu. Thou art even as he was before the great fever seized him."

"Peace woman, sufficient that to thee I am Umglubu."

Going into the hut he took the scissors from the box and bade her cut his hair. Silently, wonderingly, she did as he commanded and when she had finished stood waiting for further word.

"Now go to the council place and bid Gazi, Abantu, Jakwi, Inkwati, Kawiti, and Nyama"—he named the six who had spoken against Lomboso's people joining the Germans—"come to me."

M'Cabe, who had by this time recovered from her amazement at the changed appearance of Umglubu, answered with her usual note of contempt—

"Thinkest thou that they will come at thy bidding, Umglubu?"

"What was that, M'Cabe, the black woman, called me?".

The tone was that of one having authority. The woman quailed.

"Pardon, my eyes are getting old—Chief."

"Enough, do as I say. When thou hast done my bidding leave this kraal and go to thy own people in the land to the north. Furthermore see that thou dost not speak to any of what thou hast seen. Do this and thy reward is sure. Remember, I pray thee, the punishment meted out to a disobedient wife. Now *hamba*—go!"

Rejoicing because she was now free to to go to her own people, M'Cabe departed swiftly.

As soon as she had left he first cut off his beard with the scissors, then slowly and painfully shaved—a hard task, for the razor was dull and balked at the stubborn beard of eight years' growth. Hardly had he finished when the six arrived, panting and indignant.

"Who art thou, to bid us come to thee as though we were thy dogs?"

They spoke angrily, but as the man emerged from the door of his hut they stood amazed. In place of the dirty shrinking old man they had expected to see, there stood a figure clad in English clothes, upright, with an air of authority.

"But thou art not Umglubu the Pig," gasped one. "Has he departed? Whence camest thou?"

"My children, who think ye am I?"

"We thought we knew, Inkosi. Two years a white man lived among us, and we thought—pardon, my father—thou wert that man. But that seems many moons ago, though in truth this night he was at the council place, and asked for stories of Dinabantu. Who thou art—save that thou in some way resemble that one—we know not."

The man came closer and looked steadily into their eyes.

"Dost not know who I am—now?"

Slowly over each face crept amazement, incredulity, recognition. Then with one consent each man threw up his right hand in the salute given only to chiefs of royal blood.

"*Bayete*—Dinabantu, Chief—we are thy children."

"Tell us, my father," said one, "how this wonder-working came to be, that one whom we thought dead should return."

"There is not time to speak of that now. It is for another matter that I bade ye come. Ye heard that German tonight. What sayest thou—you, Gazi, speak!"

"Au, Inkosi, Chief, they are liars, and Lomboso knows they are liars. But what would ye—when Dinabantu left us the English forgot the people of Lomboso. And many of our people remember the words of Imbuzi the Goat, when he said Kalangas would be put in authority over us.

"Then come these Germans saying that the English will now do these, and other, things. Small wonder then that our people believed the Germans, for how should they know white men lie. But come only one of the English—such an one as Dinabantu—to speak fairly to the people, and all

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will be well. I — even I, who was once a policeman and ''onarable deecharge,' I know. Is it not so?"

The others grunted assent.

"Later," said Dinabantu, "I will speak to my people. They are not ready to hear me now. The time is short and there is much to do and undo. Tell me, Kawiti, you who hunt on the other side of the river, how many soldiers have the Germans in their kraal?"

"Two white men, Inkosi, and as many black as there are fingers on the hands of ten men."

"And you, Nyama the Swift One, how long will it take thee to journey to the huts of the Nquai—the English police post by the Water's Great Noise?"

"Six days, Inkosi—fast traveling."

"Thou must go even quicker—five days only."

He hastily wrote a note to the commanding officer of the English post, explaining fully the situation, asking that an expeditionary force be sent at once. He ended the letter with:

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
A. G. Saunders, Lieut.

"Nyama—take this and give it into the hands of the captain—to none other. There is need of great haste. Go!"

After the messenger had left, Saunders gave the remaining five instructions.

"Talk secretly among the men folk, my children, and get thy women to talk unto their women. Tell them that the English have not forgotten the people of Lomboso, and that they will yet come and save them from the Germans. Tell them that should they decide to 'go in' with the people from across the river, then they will indeed be undone, for the English are many and mighty, and will destroy those that rise to stab them in the back.

"Also say that thou hast seen a vision of Dinabantu, who made it known to thee that he would come again to be with his people. And thou, Jakwi, because thou hast the ear of the chief, do thou speak unto him in like manner."

For the next nine days, Saunders did not leave the shelter of his hut except at night when he would hold conference with the five. Then they would tell him of their activities during the day. How that most of the older men were won over, but with the younger element of the tribe there was difficulty.

"The Jackal," said Jakwi, "that prowler by night, that eater of defiled meat, has won over all the young men. This day he openly boasted that the Germans would make him chief if Lomboso did not do their will. And Lomboso durst not reprove him."

This news troubled Dinabantu, and as yet he could see no way out.

After the conferences they would wend their way to the river, and the five would sit on the bank watching Dinabantu swim. Each night he swam a little farther. On the last night he swam across the river—a good four hundred yards—and back. Then, throwing himself full length on the moist soil, he would give himself into their hands.

Lovingly and firmly they kneaded him, working at each muscle systematically. It seemed to Saunders that they would tear the muscles from his body, and he had to bite on a large stick to keep from crying aloud. At the end they would rub him gently, bringing the warmth and glow of health, making him feel like a new man.

The ninth evening he saw that the time was ripe, and he told the five to spread the news that Dinabantu had returned and would speak to them that night at the council place.

IT WAS evening of the full moon. On the morrow the Germans would return demanding their answer. The chief was troubled. For the first time during his rule, his council was divided, and this at a time of imminent peril to the whole village. The older men were opposed to joining the Germans, believing that a miracle would be performed and Dinabantu return to save them. On the other hand were the young men, who did not believe that Dinabantu would return; and even if he did, they failed to see how he could save them.

The boast of the Jackal that he would supplant the chief rankled, but because of it, Lomboso hesitated to throw the weight of his authority on the side of the old men. Yet because of the love he had borne Dinabantu and perhaps because he himself believed, and certainly hoped, the miracle would be worked he had called the council together.

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Long, long they waited in silence until it seemed that patience was exhausted.

Suddenly a white man stepped inside the circle—a tall man with thick gray hair, clad in khaki uniform.

"*Sauka bona, abantu comina*—greetings, my people."

All eyes turned to the intruder. Still there was silence. Then among the fathers of the council a name was whispered—the name of one they had thought dead—one whom they had hoped to see and now seeing could not believe that they saw.

Steadily the whisper grew like the gathering of a storm. Suddenly conviction seized them, the storm of doubt burst, and with a loud cry they leaped to their feet and gave him the royal salute—

"*Bayete!*"

Lomboso half rose to join in the salute; then remembering the threat of the Jackal, commanded silence.

"Speak, stranger, who art thou?"

"What, Chief, dost call me stranger? Yet these two years have I lived in the shelter of thy shadow—thou didst call me Umglubu the Pig; and before that thou didst know me, and didst call me Dinabantu the Just One; and yet again thou shalt know me and call me the "Shower of Ways," for I come to save thee from that great danger ye wot of."

"How can this be? That Dinabantu is dead; the other—of a truth thou art not he, Umglubu was not as thee but a thing of filth and a scorn before men. As for what we will call thee now, I am not sure. Perchance I will kill thee, and then thou wilt indeed be a shower of ways—but in the land of the spirits."

"Peace, Lomboso. Hast thou forgotten the judgment of Dinabantu? Hast thou altogether forgotten him who stayed among ye teaching the right way, and healing thy sick? I am that one."

Said one of the young men—

"If thou art Dinabantu, give us a sign."

"Ask ye for a sign? What folly is this? Think'st thou I am a wizard, a dealer in magic? What sign wish ye?"

"Dinabantu could take out his eye and hold it in the palm of his hand," said the chief slowly. "Canst thou do this?"

"Yes, let him show us," shouted the Jackal's followers. "If he lies let him die."

Saunders thought for a moment, then his hand went up mechanically to his right-hand tunic pocket. His fingers closed on a piece of round glass—it was a monocle. He put it in his eye, then faced the first chief, and then the council.

"Was it this ye meant, my children?"

There was a gasp of wonder, then all leaped to their feet and shouted—

"Inkosi—Chief!"

He raised his hand for silence.

"Listen, my children. I have been a long time as one dead. Many years I wandered through the land that is to the north, always avoiding the white men. Then I fell sick and the Black One, M'Cabe, nursed me.

"After my soul, or as ye say, my snake, left me, and I turned to the bad medicine and did that greatest of all sins, took the Black One to wife—for how say ye, 'the ox shall not mate with the ass, or the white with the black.'

"And now what would ye? Do as the Germans bid, and be forever laughed to scorn? It will be told the children yet unborn that the people of Lomboso tried to cut down a branch of the tree—for mark ye, none can destroy the tree—under whose shade they waxed fat, and lo, the branch fell on them and killed them.

"What would ye? I—even I, promise that a white commissioner shall be appointed to watch over thee. As for the police, let some of the young men enlist and they shall be appointed. Speak then—but briefly—for I am weary."

"Dinabantu—my father—always have we hoped that ye would come back to us, though little we thought that ye would come after this way. As to whither thou hast been, we care not—save only that thou hast been gone too long from us. Neither do we think that your snake was lost, but rather that it, of its own accord, sought communion with the spirits of the Great-Great, to return to thee with still greater wisdom. As to the sins of thy body we are not concerned, for well we know, the dead can not sin, and of a truth thou wert as one dead.

"That thy snake is now with thee we can well see, and with that rest content. Is it not so, oh ye people of Lomboso?"

There was a loud cry of assent from the older men, but the Jackal's men were silent.

"But now tell us, my father," continued Lomboso, "what we must do. Tomorrow,

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the Germans return for their answer—if we deny them we shall be no more a people; for they are many and have moreover the sticks with tongues of fire, whose voice speaks loudly, that all may hear, of death."

"And if I show ye a way, will ye follow? Ye and all your men?"

"Only show us that thou art a better man than the German and we will become thy men."

"Listen, then. Nyama, the Swift One, I sent nine days ago to the English kraal asking that help be sent us. Tomorrow at noon they will be here and all will be well; but perchance the Germans may cross over in the early morning. Then indeed ye would be undone.

"This, then, is my plan. Tonight, I and six others, whom I knew of old, will swim to the other side and sink their canoes—or perchance untie them and let them drift. Well ye know that without the canoes they can not bring over to this side the guns that speak quickly—the Maxims; neither can they bring the food for the guns, for the river is at the flood, and the ford hidden. Thus shall we delay them until the English come. What sayest thou?"

"It is good, Inkosi."

Now the Jackal remained until the whole of the plan was told and then craftily slunk away. With the appearance of Dinabantu he could see his chances of becoming chief vanishing. Therefore it was his intention to warn the German officer, thus bringing Dinabantu's plan to naught. Stealthily though he went, his going did not escape the keen eye of Mushla Ameyhloe—He-who-sees-in-the-dark—who quickly went to Dinabantu.

"Inkosi, the Jackal has gone to warn the Germans."

For a moment Dinabantu despaired, then the light of a new plan dawned—an even better way of proving himself greater than the German.

"Ye men of Lomboso who know me and are loyal—willing to follow where I lead—maybe to death—who knows; come apart for I have need of thee."

Turning on his heels he walked away from the council place. Twenty only followed him, including the six already chosen.

"Men," he said, "the Jackal has gone to warn the Germans, thus bringing my plan to naught. Now, listen.

"It is in my mind that the German will not take many men to guard the boats, for a feast will have been proclaimed as is the custom, and of a truth six men with guns can easily destroy many naked without guns. Therefore ye six will swim to within two spears throw of the German landing-stage. There ye will remain silently until ye hear the cry of the go-away bird repeated thrice. Then ye will make a noise of splashing and heavy breathing. We others will do the rest. Now go."

WHEN the Jackal reported to the German officer the attempt Dinabantu was to make, the officer laughed.

"So the old dog, not satisfied with barking, would bite, would he! Well, I'll draw his teeth for him."

After a fruitless effort to persuade his lieutenant, who was in a half-drunken stupor, to join in the sport, he sent for his black sergeant.

"Hufa," he said, "send six men here with rifles and twenty rounds of ammunition. We are going dog-shooting, so do not sound the alarm if ye hear sounds of firing."

When the men arrived, sulky because they had been called away from the feast, they went down to the landing-stage and the Jackal went with them.

WITH the remaining men Dinabantu crossed the river beyond a big bend some three hundred yards above the landing-stage. They cleaved the water with powerful silent strokes, the long-throwing *assegai* held between their teeth and the shorter stabbing spear held in their right hands. Ever and anon the moonlight was reflected back by the spears, making an almost phosphorescent gleam in the water. They gave little heed to the work before them, or even wondered what that work was. It sufficed that Dinabantu was with them, and where he led they would follow.

When they reached the shore, Dinabantu sent out two scouts. They departed silently and as silently returned, like shadows flitting in the night. It was even as Dinabantu had foreseen.

"The German chief is in hiding at the landing-stage, Inkosi—with him is the Jackal. Six black soldiers are there also and they have guns. At the village all is merriment, for there is a great feast."

"That is good," said Dinabantu.

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The moon was just disappearing behind a heavy cloud. All was still.

Suddenly the hoarse scream of the go-away bird broke the silence.

"Go-a-way! Go-a-way! Go-a-way!"

There was a splashing in the water before the German's hiding-place. He gave no order to fire—he did not want to kill, yet. But one of the natives accidentally discharged his rifle. It was enough. A panic seized the others, and all began firing as fast as they could load.

This was the opportunity Dinabantu hoped for. Under cover of the firing and the loud curses of the German, he and his men crept nearer, ever nearer.

Then with a yell, "*Bulala*—kill!" they were upon them. The soldiers seeing that they were outnumbered, and moreover caught unawares, surrendered willingly. Small wonder when a moment's hesitation meant death at the hands of these black devils who had appeared so suddenly out of the night.

Not so the captain. Quickly drawing his revolver, he fired—once—twice—and two men fell. Dinabantu grappled with him calling out—

"Do not touch this man—he is my meat."

Back and forth they wrestled until with a quick blow Dinabantu knocked the revolver from the other's hand. For a moment they stood watching each other.

"Who are you?"

"I am that man whose teeth you promised to pull. Now keep thy word or have the lie rammed down your throat."

"English swine!"

Once more they met in a mighty clinch, and all was silent once more except for the heavy breathing of the two men. Together they fell to the earth, Dinabantu underneath. The German with one hand on his opponent's throat, strove to reach the revolver with the other. This proved his undoing, for with a mighty heave, Dinabantu threw him off. Once more they were on their feet, constantly encircling each other, looking for an opening.

During the struggle the natives had gathered in a circle, watching breathlessly. Captors and captives alike were oblivious to everything but the mighty fight waged by the two white men. But the Jackal was on the alert for an opportunity to help out his benefactor. With Dinabantu out of the way he knew the German could easily regain command of the situation.

The end came quickly. As the German rushed, Dinabantu met him with a vicious uppercut on the point of the jaw, and he fell like a log. Then, as Dinabantu stooped to pick up the revolver—possession of which to the native mind meant victory—the Jackal leaped on him. A knife gleamed for a moment in the moonlight and then sank between Dinabantu's shoulder-blades. Vengeance came swiftly. Without a sound the Jackal fell to the earth, three *assegais* sticking through his chest.

Swiftly they raised Dinabantu and attempted to stem the flow of blood by stuffing green leaves, plucked from the near-by Mapani bush, into the wound. With a supreme effort he pulled himself together and bade them see to the German who was by this time beginning to come to. A gourd of water dashed into his face brought him completely to his senses.

"Captain," said Dinabantu, "you are my prisoner. Send a letter to your lieutenant. Tell him that you are captured by the English. Bid him not to attempt to rescue you; that you are held as hostage."

Sulkily the German ordered one of his men to take the message, and when he had departed, Dinabantu, his men and prisoners, embarked in the canoes which they found all ready for the expedition.

No sooner had they pushed off and were safe from pursuit than Dinabantu's strength failed him, and he fell in a huddled heap. Abantu and Gazi dropped their paddles and went to him, allowing the canoe to drift broadside-on with the current. Motioning them to resume paddling, he said faintly—

"Get me back to my people."

They reached the landing-stage just as the first rays of the morning sun came over the tops of the distant hills.

Lomboso and all his people were there to greet them, breaking out into shrill cries of joy as the canoes drew nearer. But when they saw Dinabantu their cries of joy gave way to lamentation, for they saw that he was hard hit.

"Carry me to the place of council," he ordered.

With loving care they did his bidding.

"My children," he said, "I would hold council with thee just this once more. Methinks the spirits of the Great-Great have need of my snake and I must go. The

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German is my prisoner—captured in fair fight; ye have nothing to fear therefore, from that one. Is the proof sufficient? Are ye indeed my men?"

"Yea, Chief! Thou knowest."

"Then wilt thou do the things I taught thee in the days gone by? Do this, and perchance that great one, the Queen of the Heavens will permit me to watch over thee. Further guard well these strangers—the white men and the others—until the English come. Now bring me my box, for I would make a magic."

Swiftly the box was brought and taking from it pencil and paper, slowly and painfully, with shaking hand, Dinabantu wrote:

Lomboso's Kraal,
Date unknown.

To Captain of Expeditionary Force.

Sir—

I have the honor to report that:

The natives of this village refused to ally themselves with the German forces. Further, last night, twenty natives and myself crossed the river and in a surprise attack succeeded in capturing the German commander and six native soldiery. Much ammunition and supplies which had been loaded on canoes preparatory to the proposed raid we brought over to this side.

Our casualties were light. Two natives killed, and myself wounded—I fear fatally.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
A. G. Saunders, Lieut.

Then in still fainter lines:

I have promised that a commissioner be appointed to this district and black police of their own people. I venture to request that this promise be fulfilled as——

TWO hours later the relief force arrived—Nyama had indeed been swift—a white detachment of twenty mounted men, and one hundred well-trained infantry. They found the village in mourning; and the officer of the expedition, ordering his men to halt, dismounted and went forward alone.

At the place of council he found all the men folk assembled, chanting the song that is sung at the departure of a great one.

"Oh ye spirits of the Great-Great, awake! Guard well the spirit of Dinabantu, our father, which is even now on its way to thy abode. And Thou, Inkosikaas, Chieftainess, Queen of the Heavens, take him to thy bosom, and there keep him warm from the great winds that blow in that place."

Again and again the cry went up with monotonous reiteration, and as they chanted they gazed on the body of Dinabantu, who lay in their midst, as though expecting an answer from him.

Thrusting aside those who stood in his way the officer reached the side of Dinabantu. A hasty examination sufficed.

"Poor devil, he's dead."

Slowly he read the last report of Lieutenant Saunders. Then standing erect he saluted the dead body.

Facing the chief he said:

"Lomboso and ye people of Lomboso, Saunders, he whom ye called Dinabantu, is dead. May his path to the abode of the spirits be straight and smooth. Because of the things ye have done this day, and because of the promise Dinabantu made to ye, all that he said shall come to pass. A commissioner shall be appointed. As to the police, let your young men enlist, and all shall be as ye desire. Now take me to the German captain."

A few minutes' conversation with that officer was sufficient to extract from him a formal surrender of his forces and very shortly after the Union Jack was flying over the erstwhile German camp.

Returning to the council place the English officer took Lomboso aside:

"Chief," he said, "Dinabantu is dead. We must take his body and bury it according to the custom of his people."

Lomboso demurred:

"Inkosi! Dinabantu you say is dead and you would take him away from us. Do not do this thing. Permit rather that he may remain with us, for, of a truth, we are his people."

Then because the captain thought Dinabantu would have so wished, he acceded to the chief's request.

They buried him therefore in a large mound near the council place. And in the bottom of the mound they left a small hole so that the soul of Dinabantu might pass freely in and out among his people. For, said they:

"His soul—that snake of his—hath but gone to the dwelling-place of the spirits to learn wisdom anew. Yet again when we are in trouble or afraid, he will come to us to show us a way. He was a man among men and his forefathers were men before him. Such an one can not die!"

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AFRAID OF THE BAR

by

HARRISON R. HOWARD

Author of "In The Sawdust Country."

THE mate of the little bar-tug *White Cap*, whose name appeared on the pay-roll as Jack Duncan, but who, when well out of hearing distance, was far better known as "Afraid-of-the-Bar" Duncan, lay in a state of half-sleep when the breathless messenger arrived. For an hour past, Duncan's fatigued senses, fighting desperately for the restful oblivion of sleep, had been kept tense and alert by the fury of the storm, the torrential bursts of rain, the pounding thunder of the bar at the river's mouth, five miles below.

Duncan received the summons without comment, and before the hurricane had slammed the cabin door behind the returning messenger, he was on his feet, slipping into oilskins. He paused, fastening the flap of his sou'wester about his chin, to listen to the raucous voice of the bar. A faint shudder ran through his enormous body, which he quelled angrily and with difficulty.

When he had mounted to the wharf, Duncan hesitated a moment to glance proudly upon the little *White Cap*, pulling restlessly at her lines. She was a powerful, formidable-looking steam tug, whose stack was tilted at the saucy, rakish angle of a gunboat's, and whose compound engines swung a propeller with the kick of a Mexican mule. Her business in life was the serious one of snaking in and out over the bar the huge lumber schooners of the Bilge Water Mill Company.

In Jack Duncan's otherwise estimable life there was one great fear. He was afraid of the bar. Now the bar at the mouth of the Suicide River, over which the *White Cap* towed her burdens at the end of a steel hawser, is one of the most treacherous on the Pacific Coast. Duncan, with all honesty, believed that his fear was justifiable; and it was his habit to resent physically any reference to him as Afraid-of-the-Bar Duncan.

At all other times calm, keen, efficient, First Officer Duncan would grow strangely pale each time the *White Cap's* nose raised skyward on the first swell of the bar, nor would his composure wholly return until her tail had slipped from the crest of the last, and she rode once more in comparatively calm water.

Fighting his way through the screaming storm now, he knew that this summons in the middle of the night could have but one meaning. Ordinarily, when the bar was storm-bound, the tug remained inside and whatever schooner lay off the bar waited at anchor until the storm subsided

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and the *White Cap* could safely cross out to get her.

But this time the summons had come at the height of the storm. It meant that a schooner was lying off the bar in distress, lives were in danger, the *White Cap* must cross out unmindful of the peril. The summons was capable of no other interpretation.

The light in the mill office showed now through the smother of storm. The whole unusual occurrence suggested countless things which set Duncan to recalling his dreams of the past. He had had visions of a time when he would no longer be merely a mate; he would wear a cap with gold braid and the word "Pilot" above the visor; the hardwood spokes of the *White Cap's* wheel would be in his hands.

But his fear of the bar, growing with each passage in and out, had long since usurped the place of these visions; and his dreams, instead of becoming ambitions, had lapsed to mere memories. He had taken the examinations before the port commissioners, and held his pilot's papers. But the word "Mate" was still above the visor of his shoddy cap.

He ran swiftly toward the lighted window, and swung open the office door. Jim McDonald, the manager, faced him across the counter. His countenance wore an unnatural pallor, and his eyes bore a quality of disturbance of which Duncan had never guessed them capable.

At the wall telephone Darbey, the bookkeeper, was demanding a connection with the jetty at the mouth of the river; and Duncan caught the words "rockets" and "schooner *Orland*."

The manager turned abruptly on his heel and started toward the door of the inner office.

"Come inside, Jack," he said over his shoulder, in a strangely thick voice.

Duncan followed, deeply puzzled, wondering why he had been summoned instead of Captain Anderson, who was the master of the *White Cap*. Why should McDonald wish to confer with him? He was merely the mate.

Closing the door behind him he faced the manager expectantly. Jim McDonald held a singularly high place in Duncan's esteem; he was the one man in all that sawdust community who had faith in the *White Cap's* mate; the one man who did not believe that he was afraid of the bar. Duncan attempted to shut his ears to the voice of the storm that McDonald might not know his real feelings.

The manager cleared his throat heavily.

"Jack, the schooner *Orland* is lying off the bar. She's leaking badly or something just as fatal according to the rockets she's sending up. You've been a question to me, Jack, for a long time. They say you're a coward, call you Afraid-of-the-Bar, and all that. I've always tried to believe in you. Now it's come to a show-down. Jack, you've got to go out and get the *Orland!*"

Even above his effort for composure, Duncan's mouth sagged at the corners. McDonald saw, and an expression of disappointment, of panic, spread over his face.

"My God, Jack, don't tell me you are afraid!"

The one man who had faith in him. . . . Duncan drew himself erect with swift dignity.

"See here, Mac, why this oration to me? I'm only the mate of the *White Cap*, and whether afraid or not I do my duty. There is no choice up to me. I take my orders from my skipper. He's the man you want to talk to."

McDonald stepped closer and placed a hand on the mate's wide shoulder.

"Jack, Captain Anderson had a stroke of paralysis not an hour ago. He may be laid up for some time. You've got your pilot's papers. Will you take the *White Cap* out over that fiend of a bar and get the *Orland?*"

In the moment of silence which followed, the voice of the bar smote thunderously in Duncan's ears. He remembered his dreams of a cap with gold braid and the word "Pilot" above the visor. A gust of wind shook the light office-building. A torrent of rain drove down upon the roof. McDonald the one man who had faith in him. . . .

"You've got to go, Jack," McDonald was exclaiming in his ear. "She carries a crew of twenty-one men. The captain's wife——"

Duncan interrupted with a movement of his hand. He had already considered all that. The consuming thought in his mind was that McDonald had faith in him; McDonald did not believe that he was afraid.

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Another hurricane breath smote the office-building; the teeth of the storm grasped the light structure and shook it viciously.

Duncan swallowed once with marked difficulty.

"I'll go, Mac," he said in a husky voice. "Certainly, Mac, I'll go."

For the first time in Duncan's long acquaintance with him, Jim McDonald's actions and words were impulsive. The manager took a short step forward, clinched the mate's hand, and said—

"Thanks, Jack, I always knew you weren't afraid."

A short, spasmodic laugh of bitterness sprang to Duncan's lips. McDonald thought he wasn't afraid! He turned abruptly and hurried from the office in the direction of the *White Cap's* berth.

II

DRIPPING in the smother of the storm, the *White Cap* lay restless at her moorings, chafing at the lines which held her, rising and pitching at the mill wharf. Duncan leaped nimbly from the cap of the wharf to her rail, thence to the deck, and across to the ladder of the upper deck.

Inside the pilot-house he blew into the tube which led to the engine room, and ordered the engineer to start warming the engines. Then he switched on the compass binnacle light, dropped the window on the wharf side, and thrust his head and shoulders out into the storm.

A dim figure came running across the wharf, and Duncan waited until the man had leaped aboard. One of the deck-hands, or merely a chance visitor, he surmised, and promptly forgot the incident.

"Let go your head-lines!" he called out above the bellow of the storm. "Hold that spring. Cast off the stern-line. Watch that line, there! Don't get it afoul the wheel; she's turning over!"

"Clear!" came back the answering call.

Duncan grasped the engine-room telegraph lever and drew it to half-speed ahead. A responding bell jingled; the wheeze of the cylinders came from below. Working against the spring-line, the *White Cap's* nose swung toward the middle of the channel.

Duncan's head and shoulders were through the window once more.

"All right; let go that spring!" he screamed above the gale.

"Spring-line, sir," came the faint confirmation. "All clear, sir."

Duncan's hand returned to the telegraph, and when the *White Cap* had reached the channel, straightened her in her course and drew the lever to full-speed ahead. The confirming bell jingled again; the staccato wheeze of the engine increased in rapidity; the tug picked herself up and with huge, powerful strides, sped down the current toward the river's mouth and the bar.

Some one entered the pilot-house and closed the door softly behind him. Duncan remembered the figure who had leaped aboard just before they had left the dock. One of the mill-crew, no doubt, some adventure-hungry spirit come for the thrill of peril on the bar. He did not bother to take his eyes from the course to inspect the visitor.

Tense and catlike, he stood before the *White Cap's* wheel, his hands gripping the hardwood spokes lovingly. For once, if only for once, he was the *White Cap's* pilot. His gaze shifted from window to window, first to port, then to starboard, then dead ahead. The binnacle light, each time his head turned to starboard, played vividly upon his tense countenance.

The skin of his face was colorless, his eyes were drawn to thin slits, knotty protuberances showed at either jaw, caused by the decisive clinching of his teeth. The roaring voice of the bar, increasing its clamor in his ears, became more intimate with the passage of each minute.

Duncan closed his ears to the sound; every atom of his consciousness was centered upon the tug's progress. McDonald had faith in him; McDonald would never know that in truth he did fear the bar.

As the *White Cap* swung about the big bend in the river, she faced directly into the teeth of the gale. The rain beat in torrents upon the windows, obscuring the vision. The bar now lay straight ahead.

Duncan drew the telegraph lever to half-speed, and dropped the window in front of the wheel. A shadowy figure in dripping oils strode back and forth across the tug's narrow bow.

"Get the lead-line, Ben," Duncan called

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at the top of his lungs, that the sound might carry against the impetus of wind. "Start sounding!"

"Sounding, sir," came back on the breast of the gale.

A second dim figure joined the man on the bow, and together they bent over the task.

"Fifteen feet, sir," came from forward.

"Fifteen feet," Duncan mechanically called back in verification, glancing at the lighted dial of the compass.

"Nineteen feet, sir."

"Nineteen feet," Duncan responded.

For a time the depth of the water continued to increase; then suddenly diminished.

"Twelve feet, sir."

"Twelve feet," Duncan called back.

He drew his head back through the window and glanced again at the compass. The binnacle lighted his dripping face vividly. He turned the wheel to starboard, and again thrust his head through the window.

"North jetty light, sir, dead ahead."

"North jetty light," Duncan repeated, again dropping the spokes to starboard.

The voice of the bar ahead thundered intimately in his ears now. Dimly through the storm the shadowy structure of the north jetty was making out to the right. A long line of whitecaps indicated its rocky base.

"Twenty-six feet, sir."

"Twenty-six feet," Duncan called back. "All right, Ben. Send your man aft, and go up on the bridge. Keep your eye out for the *Orland's* lights and rockets."

A few moments later the north jetty light swept by. Duncan drew the telegraph lever to full-speed again. The clamor of the bar reached a climax. The nose of the *White Cap* reared upward. She rode the white crest dizzily for a moment, then dipped down into the trough of the seas. Duncan's fingers clinched tightly over the hardwood spokes of the wheel. The *White Cap* was once again on the bar.

The visitor to the wheel-house gasped and scrambled for a surer footing. Duncan grinned appreciatively as he peered out upon a world of white-capped swells. He held himself tensely in control. He was not afraid, he told himself over and over again. McDonald had faith in him; he would justify that faith.

The *White Cap* mounted the breast of another wave. Hanging breathlessly for a moment on its crest, Duncan knew that her propeller was out of water. But the engines, relieved of the strain, did not race. The engineer had cut off the steam, which he would apply again as soon as the tug slipped down from her perch and the wheel was again submerged.

Duncan's face glowed with warm appreciation.

"Good man, that new chief. Knows his business."

The little craft dipped heavily to port, righted herself after a breathless moment, then careened deeply to starboard, rising again on the crest of another shouldering swell. The white-topped wave broke over her bow; a flood of seething water dashed against the pilot-house.

Duncan's head and shoulders were through the window again. He was shaking a scarred and freckled fist at the surging mountains of water rising and falling about the tug.

"Come on, —— you!" he screamed. "You've made a doddering coward out of me for the last time. Here I am right on top of you again. Come on!"

No, he was not afraid, he repeated as the *White Cap* careened and righted, reared and pitched. He remembered the presence of the other man in the pilot-house. Doubtless one of the mill men who knew him as Afraid-of-the-Bar Duncan. He'd show him that McDonald's faith in him was not for naught.

The fury of the bar increased with each successive swell. The *White Cap's* movements became gradually more exaggerated. The weight of the water dashing about the pilot-house increased alarmingly. Duncan knew that his real fight with the bar and with himself was at its height.

And despite his high resolve, his repeated assurance that he was not afraid, his old fear gradually came upon him. With it his care grew. He was more precise in keeping the tug's nose in the line of the seas. To swing into the trough of the seas to take one of those rollers broadside meant the *White Cap's* swamping, destruction.

Struggle as he would against it, his fear returned. He felt the muscles of his face relaxing. He knew that the corners of his mouth sagged. But in direct proportion as his fear grew, likewise did his caution.

Another wave broke over the *White Cap's*

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bow. And McDonald had faith in him. Afraid or not he would beat that bar; he would bring in the *Orland*. And McDonald would still believe in him; he would not even believe the man who was standing there behind him watching, the man who might be discerning enough to see the fear in his face.

Just ahead he saw the last line of the bar-swells. In a moment now the *White Cap* would be across. The back trip with the *Orland* astern would be less difficult. The wind and the seas would be at her tail.

Duncan fought to hold his control over himself. In a moment now the bar would be behind. Perhaps the visitor to the wheel-house would not realize that he was afraid. But at that moment Duncan revealed himself. He turned his head to starboard and the binnacle light played upon his countenance. The next instant he realized the effect. But it was past mending. He was afraid of the bar—the man had seen the fear in his face.

The *White Cap* slipped lightly down the back of the swell; and a few moments later rode the open sea. Duncan wondered if McDonald would listen to this fellow's tale. He drew himself up defiantly.

"Well," he said over his shoulder, "I suppose you enjoyed seeing what that —— bar does to me!"

The man behind him took a single step forward, and Duncan, with a swift turn of his head, looked into the white countenance of Jim McDonald.

III

TWO hours later, the trim little bar-tug *White Cap* swung up the bay before the mill-wharf with a taut steel tow-line out behind, to which clung the heavy, unwieldy, four-masted schooner *Orland*. With deft grace the *White Cap* kicked her into the berth at the wharf beside the loading crane; then circled the bay and returned to her own berth.

A small crowd had gathered at the mill-wharf awaiting the arrival, and as the *White Cap's* side touched the fender-piling a spirited shout went up from the group. Duncan, his head and shoulders through the window, supervised the tying up; then drew himself inside and pulled the telegraph lever to "finished with engines."

He invested this last movement with a wealth of formality. He knew that it meant finality, the end of his career on the steam-tug *White Cap*. McDonald was no longer illusioned; he had seen with his own eyes.

Duncan turned about then and faced the manager. When he spoke, there was no apology in the words, which in themselves were apologetic. The sentence was a plain, defiant statement of a fact.

"I'm sorry, Mac, that you saw what that bar does to me."

McDonald took a step forward. It was obvious that he was laboring under some deep emotion.

"Jack," he said softly, "I didn't tell you everything tonight. Captain Anderson was stricken and passed away. The *White Cap* needs a pilot. Do you want her, Jack?"

Duncan winced sharply, and a hot flush of angry blood suffused his face.

"For God's sake, don't rub it in, Mac. I've stood for jeers for a long time; but I can't stand them from you. Don't be humorous."

"You don't understand, Jack. I know you're afraid of that bar. Anderson wasn't. He was afraid of no bar, not even that Last Bar he crossed over tonight. He'd take chances on any bar just to show he wasn't afraid. He put two schooners on the sand-spit this year. Of course, we got them off, but it takes money, and the San Francisco office doesn't like that.

"With you it's different. You're afraid of that bar. Any man who isn't is crazy. You don't take chances on it. You are on your toes with caution every minute the *White Cap's* wheel is kicking up in the white water. I've been over that bar a hundred times, but no one ever took the *White Cap* over any better than you did tonight. Jack, the *White Cap* is looking for a pilot. She wants a man who's legitimately afraid of that bar, and who won't take chances, one that's cautious with life and property."

Jack Duncan stood like an effigy through this recital. He remembered the gold-braid cap, with the word "Pilot" above the vizor; he felt again the hardwood spokes of the *White Cap's* wheel in his fingers.

He swallowed once with marked difficulty, and crushed the manager's proffered hand.

"Mac, I— I'm your man!" he said.

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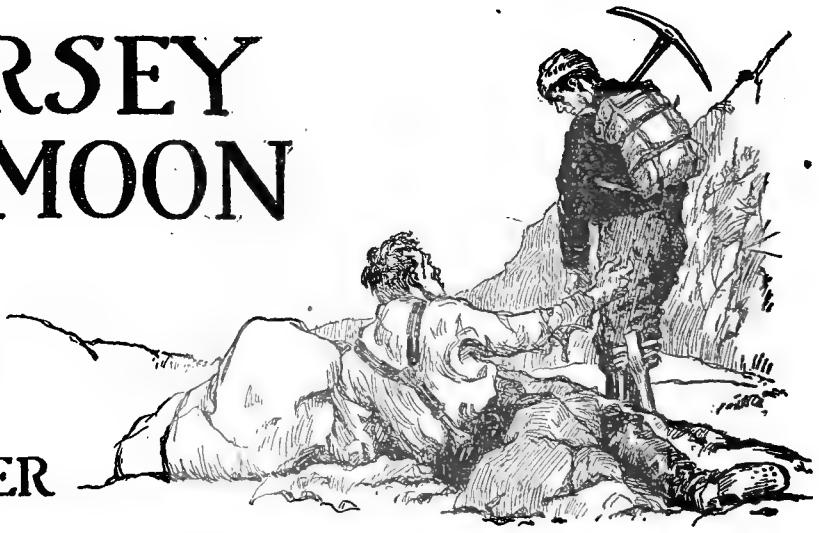
JERSEY MOON



by E. KIRBY KEENER

Author of "The Chee-Chawkos," and "That Malaskootna Glacier Episode."

HE WAS no fool—"Jersey" Moon. Nobody in Nome ever said he was. Neither was he a raving maniac, nor considered a menace to the safety of the community at large. He was just one of those simple-minded "mutts" who go along attending to their own affairs, according other people the same prerogative; the sort that smart-Alecks like to "jolly" in a make-believe serious way for the benefit of others who may be standing by, because they take it all so seriously and never seem to know when they are being "handed" something.

However, in Jersey's case, there was a limit to this man-play, which everybody in Nome Camp seemed to know, either by instinct, by hearsay, or—by experience. And those who knew it by experience were least apt to forget it, even if he did have a wooden leg; for he was a hulking, raw-boned "moose," with a grip in his hand like the shut-down of a giant Tridacna, and an orbital wallop that was worse than the kick of a mule.

But Jersey hadn't always had a wooden leg, and thereby hangs a tale.

He didn't drink, didn't gamble, didn't mix with the fellows any—just worked, worked, worked, "setting pace" out on the main dump of Hen Swanson's man-killing Third Beach "Anvil" Mine. And the pace he set was the *man-killingest* pace in the district; for he was superskookum, nonkillable, and could keep a No. 2 shovel smoking for eleven hours and a half, day after day, and never bat an eye.

Not because he was simple-minded did he work so hard for Swanson, nor because Swanson was a man-driver and reputed to be the meanest man in all the district of Nome; but because Swanson paid him the highest wages of any pace-maker in the district.

That was before the advent of the wooden leg, please understand; before he came to grief in Swanson's mine that Winter, underground.

Of course, it wasn't Swanson's fault that a few tons of frozen gravel let loose overhead and pinioned Jersey to the floor of the drift, face down in the melting slush; the steam did that. Because the earth in that part of the world is frozen as deep down as miners have ever sunk their shafts, and the most practical way of getting through it is by driving perforated pipes, with steel points on them, into the ground, attaching a steam-hose, and turning on the steam, thus thawing the mass so that the gravel can be handled with pick and shovel.

Neither was it Swanson's fault, any more than that he was driving, as usual, that one of the rescuers sent the point of a pick through Jersey's leg, shattering the shinbone so that the member had to be amputated at the knee. Nobody ever said it was—not even Jersey.

Still, there were those who held that Swanson might at least have offered to pay the fellow's hospital bill and the attending

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surgeon. But he didn't; for he didn't want to jeopardize his reputation for being the meanest man on Seward Peninsula. Or, anyway, innuendoes to that effect were generously passed about.

No hard feelings, though, for Jersey was a simple-minded man.

II

SLUICING-TIME came again, and the dumps along Little Creek and Third Beach were high and rich with "pay." Jersey Moon came also, hulking, silent, wooden-legged.

"Well, Hen, I'm back," he announced to the man-driver as that worthy swaggered out of the mess-house and proceeded to shove, without courtesy or word of explanation, discharge pay-checks under the noses of a dozen or more strapping devotees of the "No. 2," who had fallen, or had shown signs of falling, below the standard requirements of the Third Beach "Anvil" Mine.

Swanson grunted disparagingly and passed on toward the dump, Jersey peg-legging after him.

"Do you want me on the day shift, or the night shift, Hen?"

"I don't want you at all," said Swanson, appraising the wooden leg contemptuously. "I never hire cripples; it's against my principles."

"You never hire cripples; it's against your principles?" Jersey pondered aloud—for he was simple-minded.

"But I ain't no *cripple!*" he vociferated at length, with a flourish of his wooden leg, a smart spin around and a hop or two. "I can set as strong a pace as ever. I've tried myself out. I've been tunin' up for a month past. I've turned over every grain of sand on Nome Beach from the graveyard to Penny River. Why, I'm skookum! I——"

"Didn't you hear me say that I never hire cripples, and that it's against my principles? You're *through* at this mine, do you understand?" interposed Hen Swanson, the hardest-driving, meanest man in Nome.

Jersey Moon, the hardest-working, simplest-minded man in Nome, did *not* understand. He would argue the matter, and yanked the managing owner back by the corner of his mackinaw when that incredulous and unsympathetic individual essayed to walk away.

"Put me walkin' ditch if you think I can't set pace. I'm broke; them doctors cleaned me. I've got to have work," he insisted.

Swanson laughed, a mean and dirty laugh, which was the only kind of laugh any one would be liable to associate with a man of his general deportment.

"What could *you* do, walking ditch, if she'd spring a break a mile behind you? I've got a picture of you and that wooden leg——"

"There wouldn't be no break, Hen, if *I* was a-walkin' ditch; you know that."

Swanson waved his hand in the cripple's face with contemptuous finality.

"Nix; you're through working for me. Go into the mess-house and tell the Dago I said to feed you, and then get along. I don't allow loitering around my property."

"I ain't a-lookin' for no hand-out, thanks; I've got a bean sandwich in my war-bag. It's work I'm a-lookin' for."

"Jersey,"—Swanson was getting angry—"I wouldn't hire you to save your life. Now, do you get me?"

And with that he struck loose the cripple's hold upon his mackinaw, wheeled about and strode resolutely into the mess-house.

Jersey "got" him that time.

"And, by ——, you *couldn't* hire me to save *yours*, now. I'm done workin' for Swedes," he bawled after the retiring operator, whom he knew had no more right to be working that mine than Satan would have to be singing high mass.

So Jersey Moon went peg-legging down the slope and across the oozy tundra in the direction of Solomon, picking out the "nigger-heads" for his wooden leg, which, oftener than not, speared through and down to the solid mass of ice and gravel that ever immediately underlies the carpet of moss.

III

IT WASN'T Jersey's fault that Hen Swanson got caught in a rock-slide back up in the mountains not long after that, while looking over a certain quartz prospect. Nobody ever said it was; the elements did that.

But Jersey happened to come along with his pick and pan and war-bag just in time to hear his quondam employer's last feeble cries for help—or maybe they were his first.

Anyway, Swanson lay among the débris

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at the bottom of the cañon, both legs broken, his head cut and bleeding, a huge cube of rock crushing his whole left hand in a murderous vise of gravity. His companion, one Peesely, lay dead before his eyes; his mount was dead, and the other's mount was floundering about in the stream with a broken leg.

Jersey Moon shrugged his shoulder out of the tump-straps, lowered his pack and stood, straddle-legged, surveying the effects of the catastrophe with amazing placidity—perhaps it was profound satisfaction.

"For God's sake, don't stand there with your hands in your pockets, watching me die, you simple-minded mutt! Do something. Get that rock off my hand and help me out of this mess."

"Not to save your life, Hen," came the positive, unperturbed reply. "It 'u'd take some work to move that rock, and it's against my principles to work for Swedes. Do you get that?"

Hen Swanson "got" it.

Now cursing, now pleading, now making offers of money for his deliverance, he watched Jersey Moon gather a few sticks, start a fire, and warm a snack of tinned beans and coffee. He suffered, but not as much from his wounds as one might imagine, for his legs were almost numb from the impact of the blows that had broken them; and his left arm was lifeless except when he stirred. And, in the short time he had been conscious after the din and smoke and chaos of the debacle had subsided, he had learned not to squirm.

He suffered hideous mental tortures; for, like most mean men, he was a coward in his heart; the hereafter held no glorious reckoning for him. He beheld, through the medium of man's imagination, the "great enemy" hovering over him—that subtle, imponderable agent which wells over the senses in a soft black wave, and shuts out the light of day and the companionship of memory. His soul shrank from its propinquity. There was no "drive" in him now.

"Jersey," he called, propitiatingly, "if not for money, for humanity's sake, move the rock."

"There ain't no humanity," Jersey vouchsafed with droll insouciance. "I ain't had a day's work nor a dollar's credit since I lost my leg. You operators have all got it in for cripples, and I've got to pan pretty hard these days to scrape up enough colors to eat on. I'll get you a drink, though, or feed you once, if that'll do you any good. You said you'd do that much for me."

"I'll hire you, Jersey," Swanson retracted appeasingly. "I'll make up to you for all your back time at the old wage, too, if you'll only move that rock. I didn't mean what I said about not hiring you to save your life."

"You meant it, all right," returned Jersey, sardonically. "And you wouldn't hire a cripple to save the cripple's life. But you'd hire a cripple to save your own life. That wouldn't be against your principles.

"It's against my principles to work for Swedes, though; and I'm a-settin' as tight on my principles as you ever dared to set on yours."

He was tying up his war-bag. He was leaving.

"—— almighty, Moon! You wouldn't leave me here to starve like a beast in a trap—for the wild huskies to eat alive, would you? Jersey! *Jersey!*"

"Why not? You turned me out on the tundra to starve, didn't you? And what did you care if the huskies ate me alive? Not a ——, that's what. So long, Hen."

"A thousand! *Ten thousand!*" bid Hen Swanson.

And in an ecstasy of horror at the thought of being abandoned to the asperities of fate, he forgot the stone that held him in a death-trap of Nature's setting and moved as if to follow Jersey, to plead for his deliverance, as the cripple had followed him about the dump, pleading for a job.

And, ah-h, what a yell! Not a yell, either, but a *scream*, a prolonged, spontaneous, falsetto outcry, expelled with all the pent force of the inner man—and the scream of a man is more searching than the scream of a woman, to those who have once heard a man scream.

The agony of moving had rent his soul; he lay still, ashen-faced and gasping, as if actually expiring.

Not the thousand; not the ten thousand; but the tone of voice in which the offers were made, caused the cripple to spin 'round on his wooden leg. He knew that the operator was afraid to die.

"Ten thousand? Is that all your life's worth? ——, I'd have give the last cent I ever had or ever expected to have, to see daylight again that time I was caught under the gravel in your mine," the cripple chided, with solemn verisimilitude.

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"No; no," gasped Swanson; "that's not all. I—I——"

"Well, what *is* your life worth —to you—just about now?" queried Jersey Moon, who had more time to parley than Hen Swanson had to live, circumstanced as they were respectively.

Now, Swanson was a mean man, and he loved a dollar better than he loved any man's life except his own. But that life of his was sweeter to him than all the money in the world, and he knew that the cripple's mind was deeper than it was refulgent. Furthermore, he suspected that Jersey had guessed what he and his companion had been up to in that particular "neck of the woods." And, as a final fillip to his generosity, he now fully realized the gravity of his predicament. Death would likely be the next prospector up that out-of-the-way cañon.

Like a drowning man reaching for a life-line, he painfully lifted his right hand to touch the ragged khakis of a once-despised creature, to cling to those rags with avid hope, to call that creature "friend."

"I'll give you all, Jersey; all I've got in the world. Move the rock."

"Not so fast, young fellow," deliberated Jersey, emphatically. "You can't hire me to do nothin'. That 'u'd be against my principles. Besides, I wouldn't peel a man alive, just because I had him down. I'd rather wait till he gets up and take another peck at him. I ain't no Swede, you know. I'll give you half a chance, and that's more than you and Hutch Peesely was a-plannin' on givin' me."

Jersey Moon was thinking, although few people would have given him credit for more than moping. He figured that if he drove too great a bargain, and the Swede should die from his wounds, other Swedes would rise up to attach the estate, and he might not get a cent. Whereas, if he negotiated a perfectly safe and sound business deal for a part of the money now, there would still be a fighting chance to make a clean-up later on, regardless of Swanson's recovery—all other Swedes be hanged.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Hen. For twenty thousand dollars, cash, I'll sell you a half interest in my quartz claim up under the ledge, there, that you and Hutch Peesely was a-fixin' to beat me out of——

"Yes, you was, too. That's the way you beat 'Migger' Davis out of the Third Beach 'Anvil' Mine. You hired some bums to cloud his title, and then you bought the *cloud*, put up a bond pendin' judgment, and went to work a-diggin' out his gold to fight him with, while he went to washin' dishes in the Square Meal Restaurant to get enough to eat on and a place to sleep.

"Oh, I've got your number, Mr. Swanson; and I've got you, too. I seen you a-knockin' down samples of my rock and puttin' them in your saddle-bag—they're in there now. I was just about to plug you and Hutch, both, for claim-jumpin' when I seen that slide a-comin' and had to stand from under.

"But if twenty thousand for a clean half-interest suits you better than to lay here and rot, as you deserve, why, I'll tote you back to Nome for humanity's sake. Have you got your check-book with you?"

To be sure, the twenty thousand was agreeable to Hen Swanson, for he wanted to live. And, to be sure, he had his check-book with him. All mine operators are supposed to carry them in their inside coat-pockets, a note-book, also, and a fountain pen.

Now, Jersey Moon insisted upon the check and the simple contract of sale being antedated just one day, which gave the articles the appearance of having been executed prior to the rock-slide. That, not because he was a simple-minded mutt, but because he knew that Hen Swanson was a tricky man, and might attempt to stop payment on the check on the grounds of extortion under circumstances which afforded no alternative. He also took the liberty to affix Hutch Peesely's mark as a witness to the transaction—everybody knew that Hutch could neither read nor write—and returned the pen to Swanson.

"Be careful, Hen; I've seen your signature on a lot of pay-checks, you understand, and if this don't look up to form, I'll set the rock back on you, and there it'll stay till Gabriel blows his horn."

IV

"MIGGER!" bawled a flunky in the Square Meal Restaurant; "Mr. Moon to see you."

"Huh? That ol' peg-legged 'Loony' Moon?" came a cracked voice through the kitchen door, slightly pushed ajar. "Tell him to come around to the back door, and

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see 'at the boss don't hear you, 'cause he said for me not to feed Jersey any more."

"Didn't I say *Mister* Moon?" the flunky bawled, correctively. And a dirty shriveled-up, bewhiskered scullery - knave emerged from the kitchen amid a cloud of steam and stench.

"Holy jumped-up geewhillickers, by gum, Jersey! Where did you hail from? Have you fell heir to John D. Rockefeller's billions? Excuse me, but you sure look like a preacher in that nice black suit and derby sky-piece. And—whoop-ee! A brand-new cork leg, and the old wooden one throwed plum to the Eskimos for kindlin'-wood. Where the ——"

"Awh, shut up," drawled Jersey, who was impervious to panegyric and intolerant of tomfoolery, and who had just returned from a flying trip to the "outside." "Douse that bed-tick apron and listen to me.

"I've got twenty thousand dollars—all your money, at that—and the best lawyer in Seattle to fight your case for you. Come on; we'll get you fixed up presentable, and then we'll get the lawyer and go call on the judge.

"Half of the money we get back from Swanson, and a half interest in your Third Beach 'Anvil' Mine if we win, Migger; is that right?"

Of course it was right, for the two old left-overs from the days of the Nome Beach excitement had never formally dissolved their *stampede* partnership, although circumstance had often forced them to go their separate ways for months at a time. And of course they won; for twenty thousand dollars goes a long way toward greasing the wheels of justice in a mining-camp, and getting a lot of hired false evidence out of the country.

V

BUT one dream come true was not enough for Jersey Moon. Prosperity had him in her toils; there was no escape.

However, being a simple-minded man, good fortune had not gone to his head; but rather, had found lodgment in his heart. And if there was any one thing that especially conduced to arouse his sympathy, it was the sight of a cripple, for he knew that the world is prejudiced against them. And there was one cripple in particular, whose terrible scream had brought him out of many a good, sound sleep of late, and caused him no end of deep reflection until he finally solved the problem.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Hen," he said to a dejected individual who sat on the sunny side of a mean little hut overlooking Bourbon Creek, nursing a handless arm and rocking, rocking, rocking with a crutch across his knees. I'll tell you what I'll do——

"It was worth every cent I got out of my half interest in old Migger Davis's mine to tote you down the mountains and across that infernal tundra. ——! I never sweat so in all my life, and a dozen times I said to myself that if I had you back up there and that two-ton rock on top of you, I'd be willin' to tear up the check and let it go at that.

"But I'll tell you what I'll do. If you're a-mind to play a square game now, I'll furnish the money to open up that 'Peg-leg' Mine that belongs to me and you, and you can go up there and cuss the hired help around, while me and Migger takes a trip around the world. The stuff is there. She's better than the Third Beach 'Anvil' ever dared to be. Besides, nobody'll hire you, now that you're a cripple, and your credit won't be much good. I reckon you've found that out."

The Swede nodded his coincidence; he had found it out.

"I'll play a square game, Jersey. It was just the 'fever,' don't you know? The craze for making money fast. I'll do a man's part this time; open up the claim."

"And we'll call her 'The Two Cripples' Mine," decreed Jersey Moon, as he shook Hen Swanson's hand for the first time in his life.

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TAL TAULAI KHAN

A Complete Novelette

by

H. A. LAMB

Author of "Khlit," "Wolf's War," etc.

THE gates of the monastery of the Holy Spirit rolled slowly back upon themselves. A cassocked priest of the Orthodox Russian Order thrust his head into the narrow opening and gazed upon those who sought admittance to the monastery, which stood in the mountains overlooking the waters of the Dnieper and formed a place of refuge for travelers in the early seventeenth century.

He saw, scattered along the road winding up to the monastery gates, a throng of horsemen accompanied by some carts. The riders he recognized as Cossacks by their astrakhan hats and wide sheepskin *svitzas*. They were impatiently waiting for the gates to be opened, and the appearance of the priest's sturdy head and shoulders was greeted by a wild shout.

"Hey, the *batko!*" they roared. "Look, how he pokes out his shaven skull, like a baby vulture—come and take a drink of brandy, *batko*, it will warm your frozen bones! Hey, he must think we are ugly, he makes long faces at us!"

Several of the riders spurred abreast of the carts and jerked beakers of brandy from servants who acted as teamsters and wine-drawers. Most of the assembly were drunk, the priest knew, for it was a good two-days travel to the Zaporozian Island—the encampment of the Cossack army—and when the Cossacks rode to escort a fellow member to the monastery it was no crime, as in time of war, to drink on the march. Wherefore few were sober, and he who was too old to serve longer in the army, and who sought peace in the monastery was least sober.

"Stand forth, 'Split Breeches!'" rumbled the riders. "Let the *batko* see how tall you are, and fat—devil take the man, where is he——"

At the command of his companions a powerful, gray-haired Cossack pushed to the front. Although he must have swallowed enough brandy to cripple a camel, he sat steadily in his saddle until he had waved farewell to the others. Then he spurred up to the gate. The priest drew himself up sternly.

"Who is there?" he demanded.

"Cossack, *batko!*" growled the warrior.

"What do you seek?"

"I am come to pray for my sinful soul."

Dismounting, the Cossack stepped toward the gates, which opened wider at his approach. Opened and then closed behind him. His horse, separated from his companion of years, stood patiently where he had been left. Somewhere in the monastery, chimes, which were wont to sound at evening, echoed melodiously.

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At the sound several of the Cossacks removed their astrakhan hats and crossed themselves. Others sought the brandy wagons, to begin the march back to camp. They had come out of respect to the one they called Split Breeches, who was too old to fight and who sought to end his life in the monastery. The farewell accomplished, they were eager to be gone to the Siech camp where there were whispered tidings of war with the Tatars across the Dnieper.

To the free Cossacks, a summons to war was as the scent of game to a trained wolf-hound. Wanderers, seekers of adventure, born fighters, they lived by the sword. When one was born the father laid his sword beside it, saying—

"Well, Cossack, here is my only gift to you, whereby to care for yourself and others."

Fighting without pause, it was rare that a Cossack lived to be as old as the one called Split Breeches, or another who had just filled his beaker at the brandy wagon and held it up for a toast. He was tall as Split Breeches, but lean, his scalp-lock gray, and bushy eyebrows overhanging narrow eyes and high cheek-bones. His red morocco boots were of the finest stuff, and tar had been smeared over his costly nankeen breeches to show his scorn of appearances. A high sheepskin hat was perched over one ear.

"To our Russian land, and a speedy war!" he cried.

"Khlit has said well," several responded. "The horde of the Khan is gathering. Without doubt there will be war——"

"But Khlit will not be there," spoke up a Cossack who wore a *hetman's* attire from the outskirts of the group. "He has fought through too many wars already, devil take him, and he has outstayed his time in the Siech."

The tall Cossack straightened his hat and, without an instant's hesitation spurred through the crowd to the speaker. Throwing down his beaker he pointed out over the Dnieper to the further bank—territory of the Tatars.

"*Hetman*," he growled, "think twice before you say that Khlit, he called the Wolf, Khlit of the Curved Saber, is too old to ride with the Siech. He who rode alone through the camp of Mirai Khan is not ready to seek the gates of a monastery."

The *hetman*, who had spoken hastily, was not prepared to take back his words. As chief of a *kuren* his speech held weight. Moreover, he had reason for what he said. And the Cossacks knew that Khlit's years were above those of any other in the Siech. Measuring glances with the angry veteran, he replied:

"This is not a time to think of the past, Khlit. War is upon us, and the men from the hills across the Dnieper say that hordes beyond the Krim Tatars are marching to the river-banks. The name of Khlit of the Curved Saber has gone through the Ukraine to the Salt Sea. But we must fight with our arms, not names. And your arm is lean. Have I spoken the truth, noble sirs?"

The Cossacks, slightly quieted by the sight of the monastery, listened carefully. The incident had assumed the air of a council. And the warriors were jealous of their rights to decide for the welfare of all in a council. Before any could reply Khlit spoke.

"Mirai Khan would shake in his boots for joy if the word came to him that Khlit was no more in the ranks of the Siech," he growled. "Is it the will of the noble sirs to give pleasure to Mirai Khan and the ranks of the flat-faces? The monastery doors are for weaklings and men who have tasted too much blood."

Several of the Cossacks nodded assent but the majority were thoughtful. They were not given to much thinking—that they left to their leaders. Moreover the *hetman* had said that Khlit was old, and the monastery was at hand. Many would like to say that they had seen the last of Khlit of the Curved Saber. Cossack usage was not to be put aside, and usage ordained that old men seek prayer for their souls.

Khlit, keen to judge the feelings of men, and crafty as a war-scarred wolf, saw that delay and debate would not aid him. Cossacks never wasted time in quibbling. Inwardly he cursed the officious *hetman*. Outwardly, he laughed, and waved his hand around the assembly.

"Come, noble sirs," he shouted, "do you order Khlit to the monastery? How will you fight the Tatars then? What is the decision of the assembly? Come, we are not old women, what is it to be?"

With his fate hanging in the balance—for the word of a council was law with the free Cossacks—Khlit scanned the faces of his companions and his heart sank as he failed to recognize a friend. All were younger

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men, strangers, and few were from his *kuren*. The *hetman* was an acquaintance, but Khlit suspected that the officer was not free from jealousy.

Instead of replying at once the warriors glanced at each other and muttered uncertainly. The monastery was near. Yet the name of Khlit of the Curved Sword was known to them all. Finally one voice spoke up.

"The monastery," growled the *hetman*.

"The monastery!" shouted others, and the assembly cried its assent.

Khlit wasted no time.

"So be it—the monastery," he snarled. "But one fit for a warrior. Tell your leader that Khlit has gone—tell the *Koshevoi Ataman* that he of the Curved Saber has sought a place where no other Cossacks have been. Get back to your kennels, dogs!"

Still fuming, he wheeled to the *hetman* and drew out his whip.

"You have put the old wolf from the pack," he said bitterly, "and you will find many jackals among the pack. When you tell the *Koshevoi Ataman* what you have done, he will send for me. But a wolf does not run with jackals. Rather, he goes alone until he has silenced the whimpering of the jackals. Hey, alone!"

Before the others could respond or move, the veteran Cossack had swung his horse from the throng. Leaving the winding trail to the monastery, he darted forward down the slope of the mountain. It was not long before he was lost to view in the trees.

The chimes had ceased their tocsin when the Cossacks again caught sight of Khlit. A mile below them his horse was swimming out into the swift waters of the river. Beside his horse, one hand in the beast's mane, another steadying his powder and pistols on the saddle, Khlit was swimming. Horse and rider were headed for the further bank of the Dnieper, beyond which lay Tatary.

II

IT WAS Winter, the year of the ape, according to the Mongol calendar, that Tal Taulai Khan, Chief of Chiefs, leader of the Black Kallmarks, told his wives that he was tired of them. Instead of killing them and obtaining others from Circassia, Georgia or Astrakhan, Tal Taulai Khan began a hunt through the mountains that separated him from the lands of the West.

The Grand Khan of the Kallmarks knew no bounds to his kingdom. The wall that girded China, Sabatsey, the Land of Dogs, was no bar to his entrance. His horsemen thronged the shores of the Salt Sea. When he hunted, the chiefs of the country came to pay homage. If they neglected to do so their towns were sacked. To make easier the royal pathway, the commander of his armies, Kefar Choga, made, as they went along, a road that was wide and level. If a gorge was to be crossed a bridge was built. If the hunt delayed long in one spot pavilions were built of solid tree trunks and ebony.

It was the will of Tal Taulai Khan to hunt, and never during his life had the will of Tal Taulai Khan failed to achieve its purpose. That it was Winter made no difference. The cold in the mountains of the Black Kallmark land was great. Snows were deep. Passage, for ordinary travelers, was impossible. Yet Tal Taulai Khan announced that it was his will to hunt to the summit of the mountain called Uskun Luk Tugra in the Kallmark tongue, or Pe Cha in the speech of the Mongol Tatars, which signified the "roof of the world."

Nothing else would be worth the while of Tal Taulai Khan. In the woods that girdled the slope of Uskun Luk Tugra he had heard from an Usbec Tatar that there were noble stags, while on the summit of the mountain was a frozen lake on the shores of which gleamed at night a curious fire the color of emeralds.

In appearance Tal Taulai Khan was true to his descent, which was from Genghis Khan, leader of the Golden Horde, and the chiefs of the Mongol Tatars. He was taller than most of his followers, impassive of face, with the narrow eyes and high cheekbones of his breed, massive in figure, with a wide, firm mouth, black mustaches and a heavy chin.

Men spoke of him as the leader of three times a hundred thousand horsemen. Tal Taulai Khan desired above all things to be waging a war. In the year of the ape, however, the peoples on his borders were quiet, so the Khan declared that he would hunt. Whereby came the great hunt of Uskun Luk Tugra, when the rivers that came from the mountain were red with blood on their frozen surfaces and Kallmark warriors drank the blood of dead enemies to keep

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life and warmth within them, owing to the cold which smote them when they ascended to the roof of the world.

The Khan's impassive eyes had shown a gleam of interest when he questioned the *bonzes* who were servants of the god Fo and came to his court from the Dalai Llama through the land of the Great Muga as to the success of this hunt. They had made reply that it was written in the sacred texts of the god Fo that hunting was honorable for such as the Grand Khan, and that in the year of the ape he would hunt such game as he had not met with before.

Wherefore the zeal of Tal Taulai Khan, who had some respect for the words of the *bonzes*, was great for the hunt, and the death of ten thousand horses the first cold night's march was only an incident in the advance of his horde toward the west of the Kallmark land and the summit of Uskun Luk Tugra. It is so related in the annals of one named Abulghazi Bahadur Sultan.

III

GREAT was the pride of Khlit of the Curved Saber, whereby great was his anger. As he rode east he cursed *hetman* and Cossack who had called him fit for the monastery. To Khlit, inmates of monasteries were no more than suckling swine. To be ordered hence by the *hetman* of his *kuren*, or barracks, was more bitter than the dregs of *arrack*, the Tatar wine.

Khlit was not blind to the fact that if he had appealed to the *Koshevoi Ataman*, the decision of the *hetman* and the hasty council by the gate of the Holy Spirit might well be overruled. Once when his arm was stronger, he had been *hetman*. Age had lost him his rank. But such an act was not agreeable to Cossack pride, the pride of an old *hetman*. The matter, to Khlit, called the Wolf, was simple. Some Cossacks, jealous or hostile, had driven him from the Siech. They must live to regret what they had done.

During the weeks of travel to the heart of Tatary this thought fastened upon the mind of Khlit, even as the sun began to circle further to the south and the night cold became keener. The Cossacks who had cast him out at the monastery had not seen the last of him. The time would come when they would see him again.

Khlit knew that the Tatar hordes were gathering for war, and his instinct told him that it was directed toward the Ukraine. Where war was, Khlit was at home. He did not intend to join the ranks of the Krim Tatars, servants of Mirai Khan, for an old score lay unsettled between the Khan and Cossack, and Khlit's head would have honored one of Mirai Khan's tent-poles.

But beyond the Krim Tatars, his ancient foes, were the Black Kallmarks, of whom he had heard, but who had never set eyes on Cossack. It was to the Kallmarks Khlit rode. So great was his anger that it carried him swiftly over three wide rivers, the familiar Dnieper, the Don and the Volga.

Khlit's anger cooled, as his own danger grew. Riding by night and keeping well to the north he passed the land of the Krim folk in safety. Tatar horsemen were gathering at the valley camps, he noticed, leaving their herds on the hills. Isolated riders met the Cossack, and after keen scrutiny of his horse, and weapons, rode by with a backward glance until out of pistol shot. There is a saying that a Tatar's hand goes quickest to his sword. Yet Khlit's aspect commanded respect, and hence the right of way along his journey. Once only did he stop a rider.

During the first days of his journey the Cossack had the good luck to kill a stag with a pistol-shot. Some time he spent in cutting the meat from the carcass, drying it in the sun and placing it under his saddle, between the leather and the back of his horse where friction and heat would keep the meat tender and warm. He had dismounted to eat a strip of his meat and smoke a pipe in a slight depression along his path where he would not be visible from the steppe.

Khlit's ears were not dulled with age, or he would not then be alive, and when he heard a rattling as of saddle trappings and weapons he dropped food and pipe and sprang to the edge of the gully where he had taken concealment. From the sounds he had expected that a troop of Krim riders would be passing, but he saw only a solitary rider trotting slowly by at some distance. At the sight his mustache twitched in a smile.

By old experience he knew the sight of a Krim *shamman*, or conjurer, and he grinned as he noted the hideous mask which garbed the man's features, the long cloak

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that floated over the tail of the horse, and the mass of miniature iron images of birds and beasts that cluttered up the magician's saddle and which had given forth the sounds he had heard.

Relieved of all apprehension Khlit drew out a pistol and advanced from his place of concealment. Wrapped up in his own thoughts and lulled by the clatter of his accouterments the *shamman* did not notice the Cossack's approach until they were near abreast, when Khlit spoke.

"Hey, swine of the devil's sty," he cried in fluent Tatar, for he had a lifelong knowledge of the speech, "stop your horse and share the meat of a Christian Cossack!"

The *shamman* cast a hasty glance around and decided that resistance was not to be attempted. Yet the appetite with which he shared Khlit's piece of meat was not great. Khlit, however, was in high good humor at the meeting and plied the other with meat, cakes, and tobacco.

"The men of the Krim steppe do not sleep in their huts," he observed craftily after a while. "They ride together in bands with weapons. What is in the mind of Mirai Khan?"

The *shamman* chewed his meat and his dark eyes scanned Khlit narrowly.

"There are wolves loose on the steppe with the coming of Winter," he began. "And the word has gone forth from Mirai Khan, our leader, that they are to be hunted down lest too many of the sheep and oxen be taken. Perhaps you have heard the cry of the wolves——"

"I have heard the gathering cry of the packs, *shamman*," snarled Khlit. "But they have two legs, and swords instead of teeth. Tell no more lies, flat-face, or I will cut open your belly. I asked, what is the word that goes through the Krim land and brings the riders together with arms?"

"I will tell, noble chief," responded the conjurer hastily. "It is the truth, every word! This is the year of the ape, when it is written in the sacred books of our cult that there will be a battle. It is written in the books that they shall win victory in battle if Mirai Khan leads them, not otherwise."

Khlit mentally sifted the words of his companion and arrived at the conclusion that the Krim folk were actually getting ready for war, and that Mirai Khan, whose tricks he knew of former years, had secretly ordered the *shammans* to declare that he must lead them into battle. It needed no more to assure Khlit that the Krim horde was preparing to swoop down on the land of the Ukraine. Yet what was the delay? Why wait until Winter? It seemed as if Mirai Khan was not yet ready to strike.

"And the Black Kallmarks," continued Khlit thoughtfully, watching the *shamman*, "are they likewise on the march? Is anything written in the books concerning them? Where are they to be found, son of a devil's dog?"

The *shamman's* face twitched involuntarily in surprise and his eyes narrowed. For a second too long he thought.

"Aye, noble Cossack," he whined at length. "The Black Kallmarks, who are the finest warriors in the world—except the Cossacks—are marching, and with them the Mongol Tatars, all under the leadership of the celestial Tal Taulai Khan. But it is a hunt. They are bound for Uskun Luk Tugra, the roof of the world, where the green fire burns by the frozen lake. It is the word of Tal Taulai Khan that they hunt."

"In Winter?" Khlit scowled. "Their prince must love the chase to freeze his bones on the mountains. Have the Kallmarks ever come into the land of Mirai Khan?"

The *shamman's* gaze shifted.

"Not for two men's lifetime," he responded. "Yet Tal Taulai Khan has commanded a hunt. He wishes his men to become hardened, for he desires much a good fighter. Go you to the court of Tal Taulai Khan, noble sir? I will tell you how to find it."

"Aye," said Khlit shortly.

"Then ride into the rising sun for the space of a month. When you come to the wide Jaick River, turn south until the sun comes up between the summit of two mountain peaks, with snow and ice covering. One, the higher, is Uskun Luk Tugra. Pass between the two and in time you will hear of the approach of Tal Taulai Khan who rides higher."

"Good!" Khlit rose and swaggered to his horse. "Tell Mirai Khan that you have spoken with Khlit, he called the Wolf, who rides past the land of the Krim Tatars to see the face of Tal Taulai Khan. He will remember me."

The Tatar spat in the direction of Khlit's back. As the Cossack rode away, the face

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of the *shamman* writhed into an evil smile.

Khlit, usually prompt to fathom the minds of his enemies, had passed over the words of the *shamman* lightly. He had overestimated the man's fear of him—a common trait of the Cossacks. He had perceived the man's reluctance to speak of Mirai Khan. Yet he had noticed the other's readiness to speed him on to Tal Taulai Khan.

The *shamman*, on his part, viewed the departure of Khlit with the certainty that he would not return. All the Krim Tatars had heard of Khlit, the Cossack Wolf, and Mirai Khan counted the days until he could achieve the death of Khlit. And Mirai Khan, as the *shamman* knew, was at present in the camp of Tal Taulai Khan. For the first time in the knowledge of the *shamman* tribe, Krim Khan had ridden into the court of the Grand Khan. Hence, if Khlit reached his destination, and Mirai Khan was still alive, it meant the death of the Cossack. Which was what the *shamman* desired.

IV

THE rivers of the foothills of Uskun Luk Tugra were frozen, and the sun's rays did not serve to thaw the ice when brazen strokes on the copper basin outside the pavilion of Tal Taulai Khan summoned his host to the hunt that seemed without an end.

Kefar Choga himself, leader of the Kallmark army, stood by the copper basin, waiting with bowed head for the appearance of the Khan. Kefar Choga was Mongol Tatar, with the broad olive face, and black eyes of his breed. Beneath his fur cloak his legs bowed to the shape of a horse's barrel. His bronze helmet reflected the faint light of the Winter sun.

Behind Kefar Choga stood the chieftains of the Kallmark army, leaders of tribes from the land of the Great Muga, the Kirghiz Steppe, Mongol Tatars. Wrapped in furs, fortified with heavy drinks of *arrack*, and hasty mouthfuls of half-raw horse's flesh against the cold of the mountains, they waited the coming of the man they called Chief of Chiefs, Khan of the Kallmarks.

Near the group of chieftains were ranged the *bonzes*, priests who had journeyed to the Kallmark court from the kingdom of the Dalai Llama, their chests and arms naked in spite of the morning chill, and their furs white and gray. They poised their stout bodies in an attitude of reverence, not without an inward groan at the discomfort of their position.

In an outer ring thronged the *mirzas* and tribal leaders who had come to visit the path of the Khan, as custom demanded, and share in the hunt. Policy as well as fealty dictated this course, for Tal Taulai Khan was inclined to lay waste the territory of any chieftain who neglected to visit him. With the visitors mingled the leaders of the hunt, Tatar horsemen, Usbec guides, caretakers of the royal packs of dogs.

At some distance from the pavilion which was mounted on wheels, full two hundred feet wide, and drawn by a hundred yoke of oxen, crowded the courtiers, Mongols and Chinese, loaded with accouterments, jars of milk and honey, wood to light a fire if it should please the Khan to halt before reaching the next camp, and silken cloths to lay under him if he descended from his horse. They were watchful of the hangings over the door of the pavilion, awaiting the appearance of Tal Taulai Khan.

A cry of welcome went up from the courtiers and visitors as the fur hanging was pushed aside and the figure of the Khan emerged.

For a moment Tal Taulai Khan stood facing the sun, as his pavilion was always placed to face the sun's rising place. The assemblage bowed salutation but the Khan glanced only toward his horse, waiting by the pavilion steps, Kefar Choga at the bridle.

Seizing the hammer from the attendant at the copper basin, Tal Taulai Khan struck an impatient summons that echoed the length of the great camp. Folding his arms over his wide chest he watched the streams of riders that started from either side of the encampment up the valleys at the note of the gong. A steady stream of horsemen made its way to either flank, to take station perhaps ten miles away, forming the two horns of the human net that was to sweep the hills of game, closing in to a circle, so that Tal Taulai Khan could find and kill the cornered game.

This done, Tal Taulai Khan descended the steps and sprang on his horse with a lightness and agility surprising to one who did not know that the Khan spent the days of many months of the year in saddle, riding with his horde to war or hunt. Once seated

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the jeweled turban of the chief nodded affably to Kefar Choga, who bowed to the stirrup, remarking to himself that the Khan was in good humor this morning.

Drawing his simitar from its sheath Tal Taulai Khan noted with approval that it had been sharpened in the night by Kefar Choga, and, as further evidence of his satisfaction ordered a beaker of *arak* to be brought him, which he emptied with a single heave of his furred and silken shoulders.

"Horsemen from the hills," said he to Kefar Choga, "say that there are many of the horned sheep in the foothills of Uskun Luk Tugra, so there will be excellent sport today. To hunt mountain sheep with spear is better even than slaying a full-grown stag with a sword."

"That is true, oh, Chief of Chiefs," growled Kefar Choga who had something on his mind. "But the sun must be higher before the beaters are at station on the flanks. Meanwhile, if it pleases you, there is one who would speak with you, the leader of the Krim Tatars, Mirai Mirza."

In the presence of the Grand Khan, all khans lost their title, being called *mirzas*. Kefar Choga was a man of few words. He had received a hundred good Arab horses with five camel-loads of weapons from the hand of Mirai Khan to gain the ear of Tal Taulai at an opportune moment. This, however, he did not mention.

The brow of the Kallmark chief darkened.

"Is this the hour, oh, Kefar Choga," he responded sulkily, "to think of *mirzas* or the welfare of tribes? Have the Krim Tatars ever given me aught but disrespect and raids? Mirai Khan was bold to come hither without fifty thousand horsemen. Are the beaters in place yet?"

Kefar Choga mentally vilified the ancestors and descendants of the Krim leader, and hastened to smooth over his mistake.

"In a short hour we can proceed, oh, Chief of Chiefs," he muttered, "for I have planned a great hunt for to-day, with a sweep of twenty miles." Tal Taulai grunted approval. "Yet already—" Kefar Choga cast about for some means to distract his leader—"already, at sunup our outposts have taken the first game of the day."

"How did that happen?" the Khan demanded. "What hunter took up his spear before I had ended my kill? Roast the soles of his feet over a fire and throw him to the jackals!"

Kefar Choga held up his hand.

"No spear was taken up, oh, Chief of Chiefs. This game wandered into the outpost. It was neither stag nor tiger nor mountain sheep. Never have I seen the like."

"A jaguar?" Tal Taulai showed immediate interest. "A marten?"

"Neither," Kefar Choga shook his head. "It was a horseman wearing sheepskin, with a fur hat. Never have I seen the like before. He speaks broken Tatar and says he has journeyed for three moons to come here."

"I will see him," said Tal Taulai with some disappointment. "It is well that the outlying chieftains come to the camp."

Kefar Choga waited for no more, but motioned to a group of his officers who were sitting their horses outside a pavilion near by. The courtiers and chieftains fell back to allow the group to pass to the Khan who eyed a tall figure in the midst of the Tatars.

Kefar Choga, Tal Taulai thought, had spoken truth. Never had he seen a man so tall who was swathed in furs, with mustaches the length of his belt and shoes that came to his knees, with blue eyes instead of black.

"What is your name, and tribe?" he demanded.

The newcomer looked inquiringly at Kefar Choga who rendered the speech of the Khan into Western Tatar speech.

"My name," said the rider, "is Khlit, surnamed the Wolf. I am come from the Cossacks."

Tal Taulai considered this when it was repeated to him.

"Like a wolf you look, and show the manners of your breed," he meditated aloud. "Is he the leader of his tribe, come to render homage?"

To the Khan's surprise, the Cossack shook his head angrily and growled a response.

"He says," explained Kefar Choga without emotion, "that the Cossacks do not render homage to any one. And he is not the leader. He has left them to seek fighting elsewhere. He has heard of the Kallmark Khan, and traveled far to see your face."

For an instant the Khan stared at Khlit curiously. He was not accustomed to men who sat straight in the saddle when speaking to him and acknowledged no

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ruler. Then his gaze drifted to the mountains and the spreading lines of horsemen.

"If he is a fighter born, see that he is in the front of the first battle," he instructed Kefar Choga. "Meanwhile watch him, for I like not these strangers from the West. If the wolf shows his teeth, a spear in the back will make him meat for his brethren."

V

NO FURTHER notice was taken of Khlit until nightfall. The Cossack had taken a deer's quarter from the spoil of the hunt and was preparing to make himself a meal beside his horse when a figure pushed through the throng of Kallmarks around the fires, and Khlit recognized the leader of the army, Kefar Choga.

The Tatar touched him on the shoulder and motioned for him to follow his guidance. At a further word from Choga two of the men seized stakes from the fire and hastily constructed torches with which they accompanied them.

In spite of a long day's ride over the snow-carpeted mountains Kefar Choga appeared as tranquil as in the morning, although Khlit's bones—accustomed as he was to the saddle—ached from the toil.

Watchful and curious he followed the chief, noting that speculative glances were cast their way from the throngs around the multitude of fires that blazoned the valleys, as fireflies lighted the steppe of the Ukraine.

Kefar Choga spoke no word until they had passed beyond the camp proper and through the quarters of the outposts where regiments of horsemen nursed their arms beside their mounts or slept from weariness.

It was not until they came to the edge of a cliff that Kefar Choga paused and motioned out into the night. They were standing at the brink of the cliff, but Khlit had concluded that it would not do to show any fear of his surroundings under any circumstances. He was fully aware that in the camp of Tal Taulai Khan the lives of men hung tenderly to their bodies, and a stranger who slept with his back exposed was gambling with perdition if he had anything of value on his person that might tempt the Kallmarks.

Stepping to the edge of the cliff, Khlit shaded his eyes from the glare of the torches and looked out. A new moon cast a faint light over the valley below them, which Khlit recognized as one up which the horde of Kallmarks had passed that afternoon.

A curious moaning, snarling sound drifted up to him from the depression, and as he listened a chorus of howls welled up and died down. Hardened as he was to the sights and sounds of the mountains, Khlit drew in his breath sharply.

"Your brethren," growled Kefar Choga, "look!"

His eyes being now accustomed to the semi-gloom, Khlit made out the bed of the valley, which stretched as far as he could see. Hundreds of carcasses of dead horses littered the snow and lay piled in the groups of firs, half trodden into the ground by the passage of the multitude over them, victims of the cold and labor of the merciless hunt. But the horses were not alone. Dozens of dead Kallmarks spotted the valley, frozen or crippled during the ride and left by their comrades who were hardened to such mishaps.

Again the wave of howls uprose on the wind and Khlit noted that the valley seemed alive with moving forms. He understood the meaning of the howls now. A multitude of wolves and jackals was following the Kallmark horde, too numerous to be counted. The valley swarmed with them, as if with vermin.

"It will not be long, Cossack," observed Kefar Choga pleasantly, "before you lie yonder."

Khlit swept a quick glance at the Tatar. Kefar Choga was regarding him curiously, his narrow eyes gleaming in the torchlight.

"Be it long or soon," responded Khlit, "there will be many to keep me company. Aye, the wolves will feast high when Khlit of the Curved Saber strikes his last enemy to the earth."

Kefar Choga grunted. His eyes did not move from the Cossack. Khlit thought to himself that something was upon the mind of the other, but he said nothing, preferring to let the Tatar speak.

"In the camp of Tal Taulai Khan, when the hunt is on, a man is slain more often than a *bonze* can count. The wolves know this, wherefore they follow."

Kefar Choga swept his hand toward the valley. Khlit took out his pipe and tobacco pouch, preparing to fill the one from the other. He did not lose sight of the Tatar. It was probable, he thought, that Tal Taulai Khan had expressed a wish that

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he be thrown to the jackals. Still, Kefar Choga seemed in no hurry to move.

"Harken, Khlit," said the Tatar leader, "know you a man who calls himself Mirai Mirza, chief of the Krim folk?"

"Aye," responded Khlit casually, "I know his face."

"He has no love for you. When you were brought before Tal Taulai Khan this morning I heard him say to another that it would not be long before you had a knife in your back."

Khlit paused in the act of lighting his pipe at one of the torches.

"Mirai Khan is here?" he muttered. "In the camp of the Kallmarks?"

His face did not show how important he considered the news. That Mirai Khan would come without escort to the Kallmarks he had not anticipated, although he expected that the Krim leader would try eventually to unite his forces with those of the Grand Khan.

"He seeks an alliance," explained Kefar Choga. "Since he has promised your death it will not be long before you lie yonder. The thought came to me to tell you."

Khlit meditated. Kefar Choga was not one to waste his time in an act of kindness. Rather, he must anticipate something from his trip to the edge of the camp. If Mirai Khan had been long with the Kallmark Horde, he would hardly have neglected to buy or barter the friendship of Tal Taulai's right-hand man. It was more than possible that Kefar Choga and Mirai Khan had an understanding.

If so, his situation was doubly precarious. Mirai Khan would like nothing better than to separate Khlit's head from his body. If the two were acting together, Kefar Choga's warning could only be accounted for on either of two grounds. Either he deemed Khlit as good as dead already, or he hoped to work on the fears of the Cossack.

Thus Khlit meditated, and a reply to Kefar Choga came into his mind.

"Say to Mirai Mirza that when he tires of waiting, Khlit's saber is ready to meet him."

Kefar Choga threw back his squat head and laughed harshly.

"To see the jackal fight the wolf—by the god Fo, they would be well matched!"

"Bring us face to face," continued Khlit calmly, "and you will see the wolf fight the jackal. It will be a good fight."

He threw out the remark as a gambler casts his dice. If Mirai Khan was actually planning to take his life—and there was no reason to doubt it—it would be better for Khlit to meet the Krim Tatar in personal combat. And Kefar Choga was a man who would be pleased to see the two slay each other. So much Khlit had read in his eyes, with the wisdom of years.

And at the same instant he understood the reason for their coming to the spot. And that Kefar Choga was indeed banded with Mirai Khan.

He had stepped forward to light his pipe at the torch held by one of the Kallmarks. Still, he watched Kefar Choga. For the first time he saw the Tatar's gaze fall from his, and go, involuntarily, behind him. Just a little, the slit eyes narrowed, and the broad mouth opened. Khlit did not stop to think. He acted, with instinctive caution.

He stepped quickly, not backward, but toward Kefar Choga, past the direction of the Tatar's gaze.

As he did so, he heard a cough behind him, and the figure of Kefar Choga darkened. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the torch behind him whirl over the cliff. Turning, he saw the torch-bearer stagger and throw up his arms. With a gasping cry the man's knees gave under him and he toppled forward over the cliff. Not so quickly, however, that Khlit did not see the tuft of an arrow sticking out between his shoulder-blades.

Shading his eyes with his hand, his glance flitted over the camp, the groups around the fires and the shadows. Some were staring at him. But of the man who had aimed the arrow at him and sent the torch-bearer to death by mistake there was no sign.

"It is useless to look," snarled Kefar Choga irritably. "The man who shot the arrow is gone. He was a servant of Mirai Mirza, and if he is wise he will not return to his master."

In his speech there was the anger of the man who has wasted his time vainly.

VI

SO MANY times as the Kallmark Horde gained nearer to the slope of Uskun Luk Tugra—that they could now see rising before them, above its circling forests of fir—Khlit, surnamed the Wolf,

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tried to count on his fingers the thousands of warriors that formed the hunters of Tal Taulai Khan, and as many times gave up the task as hopeless.

There were more Kallmarks than he had seen in the Krim encampments, more than the trees in the woods of Muscovy, almost as many, he thought, as grains of salt in the sea that is made of white salt in the land of the Usbecs. All the Cossacks of the Siech army would equal no more than a third part of the Black Kallmarks, that followed the road of Kefar Choga with their thousand ensigns.

Before he came to the Kallmark camp, Khlit had heard of the horde, but now he marveled at the human river of horsemen that flowed up the passes toward Uskun Luk Tugra.

Left to himself, Khlit found time to meditate. Since the first day Tal Taulai Khan had not noticed him, and Kefar Choga had said no word. Mirai Khan, he saw at a distance, near the person of the Khan.

He himself was free to go where he chose in the camp, but he found that the outposts turned him back when he ventured near the limits of the army. At night fires were kept going to warm the guards, and no chance was offered to slip between them, owing to the snow which outlined the figures of moving men.

The cold had taken a firmer grip on the hunters. Rivers that they bridged were coated with ice. Winds buffeted down from the mountain heights and searched under their fur tunics. Khlit was glad of his warm *svitza*, heavy boots and sheepskin hat.

The court, Khlit among them, had taken refuge one night from the icy air in the pavilion of Tal Taulai Khan. The interior of the building was warmed by torches and fires in brazen kettles. On heaps of furs the chieftains sat on the floor drinking *arak* and swallowing clouds of tobacco from their long pipes.

On the side reserved for the women usually, the *bonzes* sat, whispering among themselves, with an eye to Tal Taulai Khan, who was playing chess in the center of the pavilion with Kefar Choga. The *bonzes* were favored, as servants of the god Fo, but even favorites were not anxious to risk the cloud of displeasure which darkened the Khan's handsome face—displeasure at the poor success of the last few days' hunt.

Few stags and no horned sheep had been met with and Tal Taulai Khan had withdrawn that afternoon from the chase in anger, leaving the slaughter of wild swine and deer to his attendants.

These things Khlit considered as his glance wandered from the Khan to Mirai, leader of the Krim folk, whose bald head glittered in the torchlight at Kefar Choga's elbow. Recently, thanks to the influence of Kefar Choga, the Krim leader had enjoyed more favor at the hands of the Grand Khan.

He knew the enmity of Mirai Khan against the Cossacks was such that he would risk much to lead an overpowering horde across the waters of the Dnieper.

Khlit drew his pipe from his mouth and watched closely, for the chess game had ended and Tal Taulai Khan sat back in his arm-chair, while Kefar Choga with a low bow acknowledged at once his own defeat, his sovereign's victory and the celestial goodness of the Chief of Chiefs to engage in the mimic battle of chess with him.

"Great is your skill, oh, Chief of Chiefs," he said quickly, "beyond that of other mortals. Honored am I to help display your potency. Yet, if it please you, there is one who has more skill than I——"

Tal Taulai Khan drank of a bowl of mare's milk which is headier than the strongest wine of Cyprus.

"Another?" he said indifferently. "Let him play—we will see if your words are truth."

Kefar Choga arose and stepped back. The eyes of the assembly searched for the new player, and rested on the bald head and scarred face of the Krim leader, who occupied the defeated general's seat.

To Khlit the mimic warfare of the chessboard with its jeweled effigies of warrior and castle was a sport for weak minds. Yet he studied the players with intent interest. Tal Taulai Khan who towered upright in his chair in white furs and silks flaming with gems, held in his hand the war or peace of three nations. Mirai Khan, crouching over the board, swaddled in a gray cloak, was the spirit urging the Tatar hordes toward the Dnieper and Cossackdom.

Outcast from the Siech, Khlit felt a wave of homesickness for the islands in the Dnieper, the familiar *kurens* of his jovial comrades, and the sight of the wide steppe. Homesickness was strange to him, and he

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shook himself angrily. Yet, if he had reasoned the matter, he would have found that his old anger against *hetman* and Cossack had been replaced by the lifelong enmity for Tatar and Mirai Khan.

It did not escape him that at the end of the game, Mirai Khan did not immediately leave the board, but leaned forward to whisper something to the Kallmark chief. When Mirai Khan arose, the Tatar was stroking his mustache with the air of a man well content.

At risk of incurring notice and displeasure, Khlit arose from his seat in a corner of the pavilion and swaggered through the throng, pushing his way among the seated groups until he was beside a Kirghiz warrior who reclined, yawning and picking his teeth a half dozen paces from the chessboard.

The Kirghiz chieftain looked up warily as Khlit squatted beside him, and scowled.

"Harken, 'Eagle-of-the-Steppe,'" observed Khlit, using the favorite Kirghiz salutation, "did not Mirai Khan say to Tal Taulai that his skill was great beyond understanding?"

The reclining fighter closed one eye lazily, as if meditating whether to reply or no.

"Nay," he muttered, "Mirai Khan said that the hunt of Tal Taulai was not worthy —that it were better to seek honor beyond the Dnieper where murderous Cossacks were to be found—a tribe that attacks all peoples, as a mad dog bites all he meets—such were worthy the attention of Tatars and much spoil was to be got."

A glance convinced Khlit that the tribesman was too indifferent and too ignorant to make game of him.

"It is the truth," added the Kirghiz, to vindicate himself of all charge of politeness. "Cossacks are good only to be strung on a spear."

Khlit ignored the challenge.

"And what did Tal Taulai reply?" he asked in a low tone, for he had not heard.

"Naught," said the Kirghiz indifferently, seeing that his challenge was not to be taken up.

VII

SO DREW near its end the great hunt of Tal Taulai Khan on the foothills of Uskun Luk Tugra, when the frozen rivers that came down from the mountains were red, and the annals of Abulghazi Bahadur Sultan told of a hundred camels' loads of human ears borne away from the spot where the hunt ended—the hunt that was to make memorable the year of the ape.

The sun warmed the snow on the slope of Uskun Luk Tugra and flickered on the doorway of Khlit's pavilion, when he awakened on the last day but one of the hunt and found four men with spears, under the leadership of the Kirghiz horseman standing guard at the entrance.

This was in keeping with many changes Khlit had observed in the camp. The morning hunt did not start as usual. There was much bustle and talking among the Kallmarks. Much *arrack* and mares' milk was drunk. Upon inquiry Khlit learned that it was not permissible for him to leave the pavilion. Kefar Choga had said so.

When the sun was high came Kefar Choga and escorted Khlit to the entrance to Tal Taulai's pavilion. Groups of Kallmarks stared at him as he went by. Khlit realized that he was attracting more attention than usual.

He found the court of the Khan standing in the open air, Tal Taulai on horseback, attended by Mirai Khan. The Cossack's pulse quickened as he understood that he was to be taken before the Kallmark leader.

"Mirai Mirza says," he heard Choga mutter in his ear, "that you have the cunning of a dozen serpents and the craft of a score of wolves, but I see it not. You have not slain a man, or taken spoil since coming to camp."

Khlit was silent, watchful of what went on, and especially of Tal Taulai Khan who was stroking a falcon on his wrist.

The eyes of the chieftains sought out the Cossack and a silence fell upon them as he stood upright before the Khan. A change had taken place in his fortunes, although he was still armed and ostensibly unmolested, and Khlit, who knew the quickness of misfortune in the Kallmark camp watched the Khan for a sign of what was coming. He did not like the new honor that had come to Mirai Khan.

Tal Taulai lifted his gaze from the falcon and his dark eyes swept over Khlit caressingly.

"The Cossacks," he said softly, and Kefar Choga interpreted, "are a nation of beasts that form a plague-spot on the edge of my kingdom. By the words of my good servant

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Mirai Khan, I have come to know of their iniquity. They must be punished. As a plague-spot is burned from a man's body, they shall be scourged."

Khlit made no reply for a space. He had feared that the alliance between the two Khans might be completed. It was not to his liking to listen to insult to the Cossacks.

"Mirai Khan," he responded to Kefar Choga, "has told you twisted truth out of the evil in his heart. The Cossacks are a free people. Ask Mirai Khan how often the Tatar horde has entered the Ukraine. Ask him how many times he has made an ally of the Turk to harass Russia."

Khlit's boldness had little effect on the composure of Tal Taulai Khan who was not wont to alter decisions once formed. After a short conference with Mirai Khan the Kallmark leader turned to Kefar Choga.

"How is a thief punished in your land, Cossack?" the leader of the army interpreted.

"By hanging," replied Khlit.

"And a deserter in war?"

"He is shot."

"And a drunkard in time of war?"

"By drowning."

"How is a murderer punished?"

"By burial alive."

Kefar Choga made Tal Taulai Khan acquainted with what Khlit had said.

"The Chief of Chief says," he explained, "out of the depths of his limitless wisdom, that no free people would endure such punishments, wherefore you have lied in saying the Cossacks were free. And he says that a tribe that dealt with each other so harshly would be merciless to others. Wherefore he holds that Mirai Mirza's words must be true—that the Cossacks are no less than a breed of murderers and ravaging dogs that must be exterminated."

Anger welled up in Khlit.

"Turks and Tatars," he shouted, "who have faced the Cossack army know that we are not dogs—yet there are few who have lived to tell of it. Tal Taulai Khan will come to grieve for the day he lifts his arm against the Cossacks if his horde is more numerous than the wolves on the plain."

Kefar Choga frowned.

"Already," he told Khlit, "costly presents of jewels from Pekin, sapphires from Kabul, gold ornaments from Samarcand, with rare weapons from Damascus, and countless silken cloths are prepared in baskets for the chieftains of the Krim folk to be sent on ahead as an omen of alliamce. Krim Tatar and Kallmark Tatar will turn their swords against the Cossacks."

Tal Taulai Khan was growing impatient of the audience with the captive Cossack.

"Ask him what punishment he deserves," he told Kefar Choga. "Whether to be hanged as a thief or buried alive as a murderer. Let him decide."

Khlit's heart was heavy. He saw no mercy in the eyes of the Tatar gathering. Rather indifference. Yet Khlit had sent many men to death. He drew himself up and crossed his arms.

"Decide," growled the Kallmark general, "or I will speak for you."

Khlit shook his head angrily. Neither death was to his liking. He had his sword, and his arms were free. He could go to his death as a Cossack should, weapon in hand. He stepped forward and held up his hand.

"Say to Tal Taulai Khan," he responded, "that he can see with his own eyes the valor of a Cossack—greater than all else on earth. Say that Khlit, surnamed the Wolf by his enemies, will fight against the Kallmark Horde. Say that Tal Taulai Khan can have sport at the hunt in following game that is not stag or tiger."

"How mean you?" questioned Choga.

"This. There can be a hunt to-morrow at the foot of Uskun Luk Tugra. It will begin here, with Kallmark cavalry far out to either side and continue to the slope of the mountain. There it must end for the way to the summit of the mountain is hidden. Tal Taulai Khan can see how a Cossack fights."

"Bah, dog!" Kefar Choga spat derisively. "Think you the Kallmark Horde will hunt for one man?"

"You asked," retorted Khlit, "that I choose a manner of death and I have chosen. Let me ride away from the camp toward the mountains, and the Kallmarks take up the chase."

"Nay, that would bring us, perchance, among the Krim ranks—" remonstrated Choga, when a motion from Tal Taulai cut him short.

"The Cossack has chosen," the Khan cried, "and it shall be so. It will be a great hunt. Better game is this than stags. We will chase the wolf. Guard him until then."

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"That were not wise," broke in Kefar Choga angrily.

Tal Taulai scowled.

"Who mutters when the Khan of Khans orders?" he cried. "Kefar Choga! I have ordered. Keep the Cossack in the guarded pavilion where the gifts for the Krim chiefs are stored. See that he is well mounted and armed to-morrow. Let him not be harmed meanwhile. It will be a good chase."

VIII

AS A gambler handles his dice before making a final throw, Khlit, surnamed the Wolf, sat captive that night in the pavilion where the gifts of Tal Taulai Khan to the chieftains of the Krim folk were stored, and thought deeply.

Around him were stacked woven baskets of gems, silks, gold and weapons. Costly rugs were heaped on the floor. Incense and curiously wrought Chinese vessels ranged around the wall, with sets of priceless armor, silver and gold inlaid, from Damascus and Milan. He could have taken up in his hand the ransom of a Polish *voevod*.

It was not the treasure, destined as a bond of friendship between Kallmark Tatar and Krim Tatar, that occupied the Cossack's mind. He could have placed a score of emeralds in his pocket from the nearest basket without being observed by the guards, yet it was out of the question to try to escape from the pavilion. Khlit was a marked man, having been sentenced to run before the Khan's hunt on the morrow.

Even if it had been possible to slip out of the pavilion, the Cossack could not have gone a dozen paces through the camp without being seen and overpowered. By his readiness of wit in the morning he had won himself a chance—a slender chance—for freedom and he was not minded to risk incurring the attention of the Khan again.

Khlit's thoughts were not engaged with his own welfare alone. The success of the Krim leader in leaguing with Tal Taulai Khan was like gall in the mouth to the Cossack whose feud with Mirai Khan dated back to the days when he had first won knighthood in the Siech. More than anything else, Khlit longed for the overthrow of the Krim leader; while Mirai Khan had lost no opportunity to scheme for his death at the hands of the Kallmarks.

The dice of fate, Khlit meditated, were favoring the Tatar. Yet he was not ready to abide by the fall of the dice. It was Khlit's nature to fight while life was in him, and so it happened that he took up his pair of Turkish pistols from his belt.

Tearing a strip of silk from a hanging the Cossack began carelessly to clean his weapons, as if intent on preparing them for the morrow, when Tal Taulai Khan had decreed that he ride armed from the camp.

In doing so, he placed himself in full view of the Kirghiz captain of his guard who loitered by the pavilion entrance. He did not look up as the warrior approached him.

There was silence while Khlit polished his weapons and the Kirghiz watched.

"Spawn of the devil," observed the Kirghiz presently, "those are too fine a brace of pistols to belong to an idolatrous Cossack. I will take them."

"Son of the son of swine," replied Khlit calmly, "the pistols are indeed choice. Yet will you not have them, for the word of Tal Taulai Khan was that I should be armed. Will the Grand Khan hear that one of his captains has despoiled the prisoner?"

The Kirghiz scowled and was silent. The displeasure of Tal Taulai Khan was not to be invoked lightly. This time it was Khlit who spoke.

"Nevertheless, nameless one, it is in my mind that I will sell the pistols, for I take only a saber tomorrow. And the price is cheap. Where is Kefar Choga?"

The Kirghiz muttered under his breath.

"One told me," he responded, "that Kefar Choga was at chess in the pavilion of the Krim *mirza*. I know not. What price do you ask for the pistols, Cossack?"

"This." Khlit held up one of the weapons and regarded its shining barrel, while the other's eyes gleamed. "Go quickly to Kefar Choga and say that I would see him, for there is much I would tell him. What hour is the hunt to begin?"

"When the sun is highest. Tal Taulai would wait until the early cold is gone, and the presents are dispatched to the Krim tribes who wait near by in the northern foothills of Uskun Luk Tugra."

"Then say to Kefar Choga I would see him before dawn. You say Mirai Khan is with him?"

"Why should I lie, dog?" demanded the Kirghiz impatiently. "I am wasting breath—give me the pistols."

Without waiting for permission he caught

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up the weapons from Khlit and stuck them in his belt. Retracing his steps to the door, he crouched and lit a pipe over the embers of the watchmen's fires. For a long hour he did not move, to show his contempt for the prisoner's request.

On his part Khlit did not make the mistake of again addressing the man, but watched until the Kirghiz rose, yawned heavily, and sauntered forth. Then the Cossack pulled at his mustache and counted the men remaining in the pavilion. There were eight.

Drawing out the curved blade which had won the title of Khlit of the Curved Saber, he set it across his knees and sharpened the edge with a small piece of sandstone which he carried in his pocket for that purpose. Outside the pavilion he heard the brazen basin at the door of Tal Taulai Khan mark the passage of the hours. He calculated that it was midway between midnight and the first streak of dawn.

Through the entrance of the structure he could see the moonlight on the fir-clad slope of Uskun Luk Tugra, on the summit of which, reached by a hidden way, was the frozen lake and the ever-burning fire of green. It was cold in the pavilion, but Khlit made no move to join the others by the fire.

He did not stir as steps echoed outside. Several of the *arrack*-dulled Tatars scrambled to their feet as the hangings were pulled back and three figures entered.

Khlit, with a quick upward glance, recognized the stocky, helmeted form of Kefar Choga, and the cloaked figure of Mirai Khan. He had guessed truly that Mirai Khan would come to the treasure pavilion, curious to hear what he wished to say to the Kallmark. Not in vain had Khlit dealt with the Krim leader for many years.

Scheming and distrustful of others, Mirai Khan had viewed with suspicion the request of the Cossack. He himself had bribed Kefar Choga at heavy cost. It was not impossible that Khlit might do the same.

Khlit made no movement to rise. He continued to stroke the edge of his saber while the Tatars gained his side and stood looking down at him. By the flicker of the torchlight the Cossack could see that Kefar Choga was swaying slightly on his bow legs, as a stunted pine rocks in the wind, from the effects of *arrack*. Mirai Khan, however, showed no ill results.

The Kirghiz chieftain, seeing that nothing of interest was occurring, withdrew to the fire. Kefar Choga and Mirai Khan waited. Still Khlit did not speak.

"The dawn is near the top of Uskun Luk Tugra," observed Mirai Khan, gloating, "when these costly gifts shall be sent in baskets to my people a few miles to the north, and your head shall tumble to the ground at the hand of the first hunter who overtakes you. Is your blood cold, Cossack, or do you tremble with fear at the sight of Tatars?"

"Speak!" growled Kefar Choga, aiming an unsteady kick at Khlit's ribs.

The Cossack grunted, but took no further notice of the insult.

"The army of the Siech," continued Mirai Khan viciously, "will tremble when they hear that the hordes of Tal Taulai Khan and the Krim folk are rolling down the mountains toward them. It is a good hunt that begins tomorrow."

Khlit sought the Khan's glance with his own.

"Nay," he said, "the hunt ends tomorrow, when the gifts of Tal Taulai Khan reach the Krim chieftains."

"That is a lie, Cossack dog," muttered Kefar Choga, "for you will be chased to Uskun Luk Tugra as a mad jackal is hunted by the pack. Aye, it will give us a taste of what is to come."

"Of Cossack blood," amended Mirai Khan mockingly.

"The Tatar Horde is restless," went on Kefar Choga, "for the hunt is barren and it is written in the books that there will be a big battle in the year of the ape which draws toward its close. Speak, Cossack, will there be a good chase tomorrow or will you drop from fright at the first sight of pursuers? Ha! what say you?"

"It will be a good chase."

"My tribes to the north, in the mountain passes will watch," grinned Mirai Khan, thrusting his bald head closer to Khlit, "and perchance you will wander into their midst and be slain by a Krim blade."

"I will go to the northern passes," assented Khlit, nodding gravely, his eyes on the Krim Tatar, "but no Krim blade will be honored with blood of Khlit, surnamed the Wolf. Many Krim hands have fallen lifeless that lifted against me, Mirai Khan. Know you not the past, when your horsemen died at my hand? Remember the

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battles of the Dnieper! Remember the ride of Khlit through your camp on the steppe!"

"Bah," said Kefar Choga, as Mirai Khan meditated evilly, "a swine marked for slaughter will squeal. The Cossack is doomed."

"Tomorrow," muttered Khlit, "the hunt will end."

"It is not written so," objected Kefar Choga.

"The *shammans* say," broke in Khlit, "that only under the leadership of Mirai Khan may Krim Tatars achieve victory."

SOMETHING like a grunt of surprise echoed from Mirai Khan. At the same instant Klit, without stirring from his crouching position, flung the curved saber up with both hands.

It was well for Mirai Khan that he was watchful and suspicious. Otherwise he would have died quickly. For he stood close to Khlit, and so rapid was the upward sweep of the saber in the Cossack's arms, that the blade clipped a strip of skin from the Tatar's bald forehead, even as he sprang back.

So it happened that Kefar Choga, excellent warrior as he was, had no time to dash the stupor from his eyes and draw his blade, when two crouching figures glided about the pavilion, and two curved sabers made unceasing play of light before his astonished gaze.

Not less skilful than Khlit with the sword was Mirai Khan. Warding the Cossack's thrusts and feeling warily for foothold as he retreated, Mirai Khan clung to his life desperately. Wrapping his cloak over his left arm he made shift to use the latter as a shield.

Kefar Choga and his Tatars gathered near the combatants, yet so swift was the movement of the men and so varied the play of sword that none were willing to try to lay hand on Khlit.

Pressing the surprise of his attack with all the strength of his great height and reach the Cossack allowed his enemy no moment of breathing space. His plan called for quick action, and though he had missed the first blow, Khlit saw that he had won an advantage.

The glancing blow on the Tatar's forehead had broken the skin, wherefore was Mirai Khan forced to shake the drops of blood from his eyes. Fearing to be blinded by the flow of blood, he cursed savagely and made to come to grips with the Cossack. Khlit was careful to keep him at arm's length, and to turn quickly, as he struck, against a blow from behind. The Kallmarks, however, were still numbed with *arrack* and the surprise of the captive's assault.

All the anger of a score of years surged up in Khlit as he felt the blade of his enemy against his own. So far the dice of fate had been good to him, and he had been able to single out the Krim Tatar for attack. Khlit was not the man to let slip an advantage once gained. He watched the eye of Mirai Khan narrowly, pressing him backward around the enclosure.

As for Kefar Choga, twin feelings perplexed him. Ordinarily he would be willing to let one kill the other without troubling himself to feel concerned over the issue. Yet Tal Taulai Khan had planned an alliance with the tribes of Mirai Khan, and while the death of the latter might not interest the Grand Khan more than the slaying of a horse, there was the chance that he might be displeased over the miscarriage of his plans.

Balancing the possible disapproval of his sovereign against the probable injury to himself should he try to interfere, Kefar Choga was unable to come to a conclusion. Dire was the anger of the Kallmark leader if aroused.

The Kirghiz warrior squatted on some carpets out of reach of the fighting men and smiled. If Khlit were killed, he could sleep in comfort, not being obliged to keep watch. If Mirai Khan died, Khlit might then be slain immediately, and still he could sleep. But in a moment the smile faded in a look of interest.

The end of the duel had come as quickly as the beginning. Khlit had been waiting for the moment when the blood from his forehead might confuse Mirai Khan's aim. As he watched he saw the Tatar throw his left hand to his head in an effort to free himself of the menace.

Panting from the violence of the attack, Khlit had nevertheless kept much strength in reserve, and as the other's left arm went up the Cossack brought his saber down in a feint at Mirai Khan's skull.

It was the oldest trick in the art of the sword, and in a warier moment the Tatar might have smiled at it. Confused by the blood he flung up his own blade to meet

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Khlit's and grunted with terror as he met empty air.

Whirling his saber down, Khlit slashed savagely at the other's side. Under the cloak of Mirai Khan the blade passed, and Kefar Choga shrugged his shoulders as he heard the thud of steel into human flesh.

Thrown back on his haunches, Mirai Khan moved arms and legs desperately to escape from under Khlit. Writhing back, the blade of the Cossack fell full upon the neck of Mirai Khan, and the latter's head dropped, held to the body only by the flesh muscles of one side of his neck. The curved sword of his enemy had nearly severed head from shoulders.

Kefar Choga watched while the legs of Mirai Khan drew up slowly and were still. Khlit stepped back, panting, and eyed them.

"It is written in the law of the Cossack," said Kefar Choga softly to his men, "that a murderer shall be buried alive, yet will we deal generously with this man and slay him on the scene of his crime."

The Kirghiz chieftain drew a long knife and stepped toward Khlit while a half dozen swords flashed in the torchlight. Still further, Khlit drew back and held up his hand. He sheathed his saber in its scabbard.

"The word of Tal Taulai Khan!" he cried. "No man may take sword or spear against the game marked for the chase of the Grand Khan. Did he not say so this morning in the council? Who is the man to go against the word of the chief of chiefs?"

The Tatars halted and sought each other with questioning glances.

"Tal Taulai Khan himself has said," went on Khlit calmly, although his breaths came deeply, "that none shall harm me until the hunt, and that weapons shall be given me. Who shall say otherwise?" He swept the circle of Tatars with his eyes.

"There was a feud between Mirai Khan and the Wolf," he went on, "and Mirai Kahn had an arrow shot at my back. Kefar Choga himself saw. Wherefore is Mirai Khan dead. The feud is settled. Why not?"

With a last look at his enemies, Khlit turned his back. Taking up the sword of Mirai Khan he stooped and with a quick stroke freed the head from the body of the Tatar. Placing the head beside him he sat down.

And Kefar Choga murmured under his breath, for the back of Khlit was turned toward them.

IX

AND so came near the end of the great hunt of Tal Taulai Khan in the year of the ape, as written in the annals of Abulghazi Bahadur Sultan. Also is the tale of the last day and night, when the moon was full on the green fire that burned on Uskun Luk Tugra, written in the books of the *bonzes* who carried the news to the Dalai Llama in the mountains of Thibet.

The annals of Abulghazi Bahadur Sultan tell how fifty yoke of oxen carried baskets of gifts from the Kallmark Khan to the Krim chieftains at dawn of the last day of the hunt.

And now none spoke to Tal Taulai Khan until noon, for there was a frown on the face of the Khan, and Mirai Khan had been slain in the night, and no man was willing to lose his life in telling the news.

Never had hunt begun with such preparations. Khlit, from his pavilion, where he sat alone under guard by the headless body of Mirai Khan, had watched the departure of the gifts that were to ally Tatar with Tatar and overwhelm the Siech. He heard the beat of horses' hoofs as riders rode out to stations to the north and south ready for the beginning of the chase.

When the beat of hoofs had ceased, Khlit knew that the horde of Tal Taulai Khan stretched for a score of miles in a crescent through the foothills, with the mountain in the center of the crescent. He had polished the blade of his saber, wiping away all traces of blood, and the Tatar guards heard strange sounds in the pavilion for Khlit was endeavoring to sing to himself.

He sang in a harsh guttural the annals of the Ukraine that have no end, and the Kirghiz chieftain cursed, for no sleep would come to him. When his song was ended, Khlit had crossed himself devoutly, first removing his hat, and sheathed his saber against the summons to mount.

And the Tatars who thronged about the pavilion as Tal Taulai Khan struck the summons to the chase on the copper basin, saw a strange sight. A choice arab horse had been picked for Khlit by Kefer Choga himself.

"When you are loosed," snarled the Tatar as he motioned for Khlit to come from the

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pavilion, "I shall not be far behind. We have a score to settle, you and I, by the name of the great god Fo!"

"Even so," answered Khlit, and the Tatars murmured in surprise.

For they had seen the captive that was to be hunted to death leap from the steps of the pavilion to the back of his mount, and, lashing the horse's flanks with his Cossack whip, ride like a frightened bird through the camp. On the back of his horse Khlit stood upright, his cloak flying behind him, and his saber whirling around his head. Rode so, and when he was lost to view around the first group of fir trees, sank to his saddle and settled into a long stride toward the slope of Uskun Luk Tugra.

As he went, Khlit surveyed his surroundings critically. Much of the lay of the land he had learned from the Tatars in camp. The slope of Uskun Luk Tugra, fir clad, and rising to forbidding cliffs began some half dozen miles in front of him. Up this he could not go unless he knew one of the concealed pathways that were the secret of the Tatars *shammans* who thus guarded the green fire that burned at night.

On each side of him were the snow-coated hillocks, rock strewn, with scattering grove of stunted firs that served to conceal him temporarily from his pursuers. To the north these hillocks stretched into the mountain passes where were camped the Krim tribes, waiting the advent of Tal Taulai Khan. Passage here was not possible.

To the south was a waste of snow of rock ravines that promised no thoroughfare.

Khlit wasted no time in hesitating as to his course. At the first opening in the firs he turned north.

He was passing now between silent ranks of evergreens, twisting and dodging in and out to avoid thickets, but keeping his course by the sun which was high overhead. A glance showed him that he was leaving a clear trail in the snow.

Somewhere behind him he knew that Kefar Choga and Tal Taulai Khan, fired with the lust of the hunt, were upon his tracks, with their packs of dogs and horsemen. On each side of him the riders from the wings were closing in.

Khlit did not hurry. He steadied his horse to a rapid gallop, feeling with approval the pliable muscles of his mount's chest and forelegs. The horse was fresh and needed little urging. When he came to a thicket, Khlit halted and drew out pipe and tobacco. As he struck spark to tinder he listened. The horse pricked up his ears. Some distance behind, Khlit heard the faint shouts of men. Although there was no sound of the dogs, he knew that they were on the trail, under the eye of Tal Taulai Khan himself.

Urging his mount forward, Khlit resumed his flight to the north. The Cossack was not given to overmuch thought, yet he pondered the lot of Mirai Khan. Yesterday the dice of fate had fallen as the Krim leader wished. Today Mirai Khan was a name on the tongues of men. The old feud was settled. How was he, Khlit, to fare? Were the two enemies to fall together at the last of the grand Khan's hunt? Was Khlit decreed by the dice of fate to return to the Dnieper and to tell how the hunt had ended?

Of one thing Khlit was aware. Greater things would come to pass that day than were in the mind of Kefar Choga, or of the consummate chess player, Tal Taulai Khan. Greater even, than written in the books of the *bonzes*. Of that he was certain.

Khlit had told Mirai Khan that he would turn his horse's head to the Krim tribes to the north. As he had promised, he did, hastening on at a pace that kept him just within earshot of the pursuing horsemen.

But now a change had come over Khlit. A little while ago he had been looking back over his shoulder as he rode. Now he watched the way ahead, scanning each clump of brush as he approached and eying tracks in the snow which became more frequent.

That he must be nearing the Krim encampment, he knew, yet there was no sound, nor could he see horsemen in his occasional glimpses up ravines ahead. He selected high ground and rode cautiously.

X

THE sun was well past its highest point and the shadows of the firs were lying prostrate across his path when Khlit came face to face with the first of the Krim folk.

Galloping into a clearing in the firs he drew his horse sharply back.

The clearing was filled with moving forms of men. Khlit recognized the small figures, and round helmets of the Krim cavalry.

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Each horseman was fully armed with bow at his saddle's side and quiver at his back. The leaders drew rein and stared at Khlit who raised his hand to attract attention.

"Listen, men of the steppe," he said quickly.

The remaining horsemen came to a halt, at the summons of Khlit's raised hand. Their keen ears were strained into the distance. Khlit saw several whisper together. At the same instant he caught the sound of the pursuit, louder than before, and the crashing of many horsemen in the brush.

"Hey, men of the steppe," he cried, "do you hear the hunt of Tal Taulai Khan approaching? The Kallmark Horde is hot on the chase!"

At a signal from one of their number the Tatars divided, passing to each side into the bush. Khlit waited quietly, hand near his sword, but none came near him. With a breath of relief he spurred on his horse, choosing the thickest cover, and bending low in the saddle.

His quick eye did not miss the change in the woods. Cleared spaces showed him vistas of moving horsemen. Thickets revealed Tatar helmets standing stationary. The snow underground was thickly trampled. Khlit must be nearing the Tatar camp, yet he saw no signs of tents or cattle herds.

Further into the ranks of the Krim folk he trotted, his skill sufficing to keep him from running into the moving groups. Isolated Tatars galloped full upon him, stared, and passed on at sight of his drawn sword. Once he caught the sound of horns blaring in the hills above him.

He heard a shot echo behind him. Then another, followed by a crackle of shots that seemed to roll up the hills and back into the valleys. Khlit stopped his horse in a grove and listened. The woods behind him were stirring with sound. Shots continued, and he caught the frightened neigh of a horse. Trumpets sounded from several quarters. Truly the hunt of Tal Taulai Khan, he considered, was growing.

Making fast the reins of his horse to a tree trunk, Khlit clambered from its back to the branches of the fir. Grunting with distaste, for climbing trees was not to his liking, he gained a height where he could look out over his surroundings.

He had a full view of the hunt of Tal Taulai Khan. Swarming over the wooded ridges in his rear, distinct against the snow, he saw myriads of horsemen, interspersed with packs of dogs. Every clearing was black with men moving up into the hills. The hunt was drawing its net about him. Yet Khlit was not alone in the net.

Moving down from the hills, in the valleys he could make out swarms of brown-cloaked riders, mounted on small steppe ponies. These were the Krim Tatars, moving from their encampment. Restlessly they pushed ahead, frequently stopping to consult together or to rally to the colored ensigns which led the warriors of each tribe.

Were the Krim Tatars riding to a chase? Had they decided to come down to meet the Kallmark Tatars? Were they uneasy for Mirai Khan, their leader of a score of years? Khlit tugged at his mustache and watched them narrowly.

As he watched he heard the crackle of shots growing like the snapping of fire, and a dull shouting arose. The dice of fate, thought Khlit, were thrown upon the board and he must abide by the issue.

"If Mirai Khan leads the Krim Tatars into battle," he quoted to himself, "there will be victory."

But Mirai Khan was dead. The one man who knew the hearts of both Kallmark Tatar and Krim Tatar, who had tried to bring together these nations long hostile, was not living.

As he watched Khlit learned the meaning of the shots that grew into a long roll. Across one of the clearings he saw a regiment of Kallmarks gallop. Uneasily the riders moved about, a few horsemen darting out to left and right as if to learn what was going on near by. Then Khlit saw a strange thing. The leading riders sank from their horses to the ground, writhed, and lay still. Those following went forward a few paces, their ranks thinning.

Distant as he was, Khlit could make out a flight of arrows that swept from the woods into the Kallmark ranks. Other bands of brown-cloaked and helmeted Tatars that were not Kallmarks emerged from the wood and drew in around the remaining riders. Swords flickered in the sun's rays.

And then more Kallmarks swarmed into the clearing. The riders now were so mingled that there was no telling Kallmark from Krim. Yet always, they fell to the snow, singly and in groups. Khlit did not wait to learn the result of the combat in the

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clearing. He had seen what he wanted.

"It will be a good hunt," he said softly, climbing upon his horse, for above the shouts and confusion he caught the sound of horsemen approaching him.

XI

GLANCING back, Khlit saw several figures come into view a quarter-mile behind him. He made out the squat, menacing form of Kefar Choga, wearing the cloak embroidered with his rank, and the tall Kirghiz chieftain. They rode behind a pack of dogs. By chance, or keen scent the pack had followed him through the maze of firs.

Khlit bent low to avoid a possible pistol shot and urged his horse to full pace. Kefar Choga did likewise, accompanied by the Kirghiz. Khlit's mount had had a brief rest, but the other two appeared as fresh. Looking back a second time the Cossack saw that the distance had neither grown nor diminished. He remembered Kefar Choga's promise to find him out in the hunt, and he knew that the Kallmark was not one to be lightly shaken off.

Khlit regretted that he had disposed of his pistols to the Kirghiz as he heard the crack of a shot behind him and saw the snow fly up a short distance ahead.

Turning aside, he swept through a thicket down into a ravine, dodged among some boulders and came out on the level again to find that Kefar Choga had won a hundred paces nearer. Waving his hand at the Kallmark he urged his horse up a rise, listening for the crack of a pistol.

The tired beast stumbled and floundered its way to the summit. Although the two pursuers should have been near by this time, Khlit could not hear them. Instead he heard a sound that made him turn in his saddle.

Kefar Choga had pulled his mount to a sudden halt. The Kirghiz drew up beside him. The pack of dogs scattered to every quarter. In Khlit's ears echoed the shrill battle-cry of the Krim Tatars.

A troop of the Krim warriors whom he had not seen on his flank had circled around the Kallmark horsemen. One of them pointed to Kefar Choga's cloak with an exclamation. As a pack of wolves dart in on a stag at bay the horsemen swerved and rode at the two.

The Kirghiz cooly discharged his other pistol without effect. Khlit saw one Krim rider and then another go down before Kefar Choga's weapon. Then the horsemen crowded into a circle. The flashing swords were sheathed, and Khlit knew that the last of his pursuers was out of the way.

Wisely deciding not to attract the attention of the Krim cavalry to himself he trotted on and found that he was making his way into the encampment of the Krim Tatars. Gray tents stood on every quarter. Embers of fires blackened the snow. Empty wagons were ranged at intervals. In the camp Khlit saw no man stirring.

XII

LOOKING about him curiously, he had almost gained the farther side of the camp, on the point nearest to Uskun Luk Tugra which loomed overhead, when he saw a movement in one of the tents.

Guiding his horse hither Khlit noted that outside were piled heaps of baskets that appeared familiar. Costly rugs were torn into shreds on the snow. Gold vessels had been trampled underfoot. The baskets themselves had been emptied and cast aside. Khlit pondered as he eyed the remnants of Tal Taulai Khan's gifts to the Krim Tatars.

Recalling the movement in the tent, he swept the tentpole to the ground with his saber. The cloth covering writhed as it lay prostrate.

"Unnamed one," growled Khlit, "come, or be spitted to the ground."

The movement under the tent hastened and presently a dismal-looking figure stood upright. A red cloak was tangled in the man's legs and the front of his undergarment bulged, while from it hung an emerald necklace, with a sapphire cross.

"Hey, *shamman*," greeted Khlit, remembering his acquaintance of the steppe, "are you a vulture that you prey upon the gifts of a Khan? Disgorge the jewels, toad, and come here!"

The *shamman* obeyed, his face quivering with fright.

"It is the day of fate," he whimpered, "it is the doom of the Krim folk. The Black Kallmarks are marching upon us. Their lines draw in like a net. They are traitors and idolatrous-foresworn! Before today we had awaited them as friends."

"Where is Mirai Khan, who leads the

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Krim Tatars to victory?" mocked Khlit.

"Aie!" the *shamman* wailed, stuffing a costly necklace unnoticed by Khlit into his sleeve, "Mirai Khan is dead, his head severed from his body. It is the beginning of doom for the Krim nation. None shall survive the net of the Black Kallmarks who are more numerous than the sands of the salt seas——"

He broke off to cower as the din of combat swept up to the two. Khlit's nostrils expanded as with pleasure. He harkened to the cries and shots that echoed from every quarter of the hills.

"It is not my doom, devil take it," he cried. "Come *shamman*, show the way to the summit of Uskun Luk Tugra, the roof of the world, for your tribe knows it well. The doom of this day is great for the Kallmark hunters who have found other game than they sought, yet it is written that you and I, the wolf and the serpent, shall pass through."

Wherefore it happened that Khlit rode silently behind the moaning form of the conjurer up concealed paths in Uskun Luk Tugra, past waterfalls that moistened his horse's feet, and between chasms that glowed on their summits with green fire until he came out on the snow of the summit and stood amazed at the flat field of shimmering glow that seemed to be the fires of a thousand devils, soft, as deep as an emerald's glow.

"By my faith," he swore, "is this the court of the devil? No land was ever so flat, and fires burn red, not green."

He shuddered, while the *shamman* edged close to his horse for warmth, for the cold on the roof of the world was great.

"Nay, noble Cossack," he whined, "the flat is but a frozen lake, and the fire is not flame but light. See—" he caught up a bit of rotten wood—"it is harmless, we call it phosphorus and it lies on the dead trees that were killed when the lake gripped their roots."

The *shamman* laid his flaming hand on the mane of the horse which did not stir.

"It is well," said Khlit, "come."

And the journey of the two continued along the lake, lit by the green fire, until they could see down into the valleys where the two hordes had been.

Many fires were there, and over all the dim light of the moon. The noise of the battle in which tribe was at death grips with tribe had rolled into farther valleys where the outer wings of Tal Taulai Khan's host were engaged with the remnants of the Krim army. Khlit watched for so long that the *shamman* became faint with the cold.

Fires that had spread in the groves of firs lighted the landscape, and showed where horsemen moved in countless ranks over the farther hills. Khlit had eyes only for sight of this, but the *shamman* who had suffered much, shuddered when he saw that the battlefield abandoned by the horsemen was black with moving objects. No sound came up to them, but he recognized the wolves that followed in the track of Tal Taulai's horde, covering the scene of the battle, like vermin upon a wound.

So Khlit saw the end of the hunt of Tal Taulai Khan.

For those who care to know more of the matter there are the annals of Abulghazi Bahadur Sultan, wherein is found an account of how the horde of Tal Taulai Khan turned back from the hunt after the great battle of two days and one night in which the tribe of Mirai Khan was annihilated.

It was thus that the prophesy written concerning the year of the ape was fulfiled, although it was the Krim Tatars and not the Cossacks that fought the Grand Khan. In the annal of Abulghazi Bahadur Sultan it is explained that the battle began when the host of the Black Kallmarks advanced unawares against the Krim tribe. Yet the cause of the battle, as written in the annals, was otherwise.

It was due to the gifts of Tal Taulai Khan to the Krim chieftains. For out of the first basket from the Grand Khan opened by the Krim men rolled the head of Mirai Khan, leader of the Krim horde. Yet it is written in the annals that Tal Taulai Khan afterward took an oath upon an image of a god that neither he nor his men had placed the head of Mirai Khan in the baskets that were sent as gifts, not otherwise.

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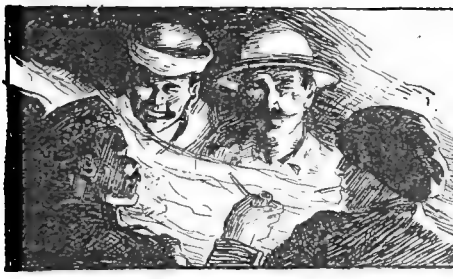

THE CAMP-FIRE
A Free-to-All Meeting-Place For Readers Writers and Adventurers

JACK LONDON. Surely he *does* deserve a tribute from all of us, as do the three other men Mr. Rollings mentions and many another adventurer who has passed out of the world in which he found so much life.

We must have a new Camp-Fire custom, some kind of fitting farewell and tribute to those of us who take the long trail, a toast to them, a salute as their way at last parts from our way. God knows there will be many to leave us in these bloody months or years to come. Stand, comrades of our Camp-Fire, hats off, heads bowed, and let each one of us send out his own inward Godspeed to London, Duncan, Davis, Smith and all the others of our kind who have gone. And with our Godspeed let us send out our silent thanks to them for the manly lives they lived in our sight.

And, now, our thanks to Mr. Rollings for leading us to stand up man-fashion and say the things that lay hidden in us. Here is his letter:

It is now almost a year since that master "teller of strange tales," Jack London, passed out on the "Long Trail." Since the daily press printed the sad news of his departure I have watched each issue of the "Camp-Fire" expecting to see some fitting tribute paid to one who (perhaps more than any other) brought to the modern reading public the savor and romance of the "Open Trail."

Among the world wanderers who gather 'round the Camp-Fire there must be many whose trails have crossed with ours, both here and in foreign lands. In my boyhood, among some of the Chippewa tribes, I remember a custom that when any noted "brave" had departed, they held a counsel and each man rose in his place and paid fitting tribute to the dead. Would it not be possible in some future issue to have each one, who had been favored with his acquaintance, rise in his place and pay some tribute of reminiscence to the tramp who wrote the "Call of the Wild"?

Some other men have passed out in the last three years that it seems strange were not "mentioned in passing." Norman Duncan, Richard Harding Davis and Hopkinson Smith, all were men who will be missed among the circles of adventurers, but, above all, it seems to me that London is certainly entitled to some "In Memoriam."—C. R. ROLLINGS.

P. S.—Think too, of the buried stories that would be brought to light by such a page.

AN INTERESTING word from L. Patrick Greene on his story in this issue. You already know that Mr. Greene writes of Africa from intimate knowledge and personal experience.

In my story, "The White Kaffir," which by the way is the first story I ever wrote, *Dinabantu* is a composite portrait. *Dinabantu* is, I hope, still alive; he was a good friend of mine. The judgment of Dinabantu is indeed spoken of by the natives in his district. *Umglubu the Pig* might be any one of the white men, "gone black," that I met or heard of.

It may be doubted that any man could "come back" so quickly as I have made *Umglubu;* but it is a matter of record that during the Matabele rebellion one of these unfortunate men, a White Kaffir, was instrumental in saving a number of settlers in a certain district.

The song that the young men sing is the actual war chant of the Matabele race.

I THINK I told you that a sister of our comrade Lieutenant Pat O'Brien of the Royal Flying Corps wrote me saying it was reported he had gone out on patrol on the French front and not returned and asking me to try to get some definite information. Many strange things are asked of the editor of *Adventure*, and he is not always able to do what is asked, but in that case he was not only willing but saw a chance to get what was wanted.

Our comrade Dean Ivan Lamb had, as you know, secured his discharge from the Royal Flying Corps and come back to give his services to his own country after two years' service, most of it on the French front. The next time he came into the office I told him about O'Brien and he sat right down and wrote three letters. Last night, at the Adventurers' Club dinner, he

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handed me a reply stating that Lieutenant O'Brien is a prisoner of war in Germany.

BUT when I first spoke to him he said, "Oh, the Germans will drop a message over our lines if they've captured him or know his fate." And, sure enough, a few days later came word from O'Brien's sister that a German flier had done just this. In this brutal war it seemed a strangely kind thing to do, particularly for a Hun. So I asked Sergeant Lamb a number of questions.

It seems that the air service is the one service in all the war that has preserved the old traditions of warfare and even added touches of extra chivalry. The airmen in many ways fight like knights of old, with every courtesy to a worthy foe. It is the established custom, when an enemy plane is shot down, to notify his friends of the airman's fate.

A single plane bears the message. It must fly in a perfectly straight line toward the enemy lines, doing no maneuvering. Sometimes it displays a white rag of some kind, but this is not necessary. The enemy planes and anti-aircraft guns, recognizing the intent, leave the messenger plane unmolested. It is understood that it must carry no camera and do nothing except deliver the message. The message is dropped and the flier returns, again holding rigidly to a straight line and again entirely unmolested.

BOTH sides do this. And both make it a point to take care of any enemy airman brought down alive within their lines —protecting him from the crowds, seeing to it that, if hurt, he receives the best attention. One of our Camp-Fire comrades saw a Zeppelin brought down over London by an incendiary bomb from an English plane above it. He said the Zeppelin had hardly hit the ground before the English birdman had landed close to it, ready to give the aid that in this case was not needed.

It is good to think about.

OTHER experienced American aviators who have come home from foreign service to serve America have come into the office, all of them with stirring tales of the war in the air and, finely enough, always with tales about other fellows, not about themselves. At least so far as anything heroic is concerned; luckily for me they have talked a little about themselves and their every-day lives over there; but not at all about their exploits except unwillingly when cornered and pumped.

INCIDENTALLY, this is a good time to kill the many and circumstantial reports of the death of Tracy Richardson, famous among adventurers as a machine-gun expert par excellence even before the Great War began. Lieutenant Bond and Lieutenant Tracy Richardson, both in the uniform of the British Naval Air Service, having both served previously with the Canadian infantry and both here to serve the United States, were in the office the other day together and Richardson was very far from dead. He had risen to the rank of major in the "Princess Pats," then transferred to the air service and, first and last (I learned from others) had been pretty well shot up, but he was decidedly all in one piece and looking for more of the same. I learned (also entirely from others) that he had earned for himself over there a reputation as one of the best machine-gun operators on either side. I asked him to give me a word direct from himself for the Camp-Fire to reassure the many who know him that he was still alive, but he sort of shied away, so I'm telling it instead.

SINCE the above was written you have probably learned through the daily newspapers that Lieutenant Pat O'Brien leaped from a moving train one night after his capture and made good his escape. He had been made prisoner in a fight with four German planes, after accounting for one of them, had been shot through the upper lip, and his machine had dropped with him some eight thousand feet. Miraculously enough, he was not killed, being taken to a German hospital and then given three weeks in a prison-camp near Courtrai. The train from which he jumped, some sixty miles inside Germany, was going about thirty miles an hour, and, besides fresh injuries, the old wound was reopened and he was knocked unconscious. But it was not yet dawn and, by another miraculous chance, he was not retaken.

For seventy-two days he was a fugitive, traveling only at night, living on what vegetables he could find still in the fields, swimming rivers and canals, through

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Germany, Luxemburg and Belgium. A Belgian finally gave him old clothes to put on over his uniform and directed him on his way. At the Dutch frontier, after a bridge he had built over the electrically charged wires had collapsed and let him in for a bad shock, he succeeded in tunneling under them with his bare hands, squeezed through unobserved and—was free. The nearest British consulate sent him on to London.

HERE'S a good look-in on Indian ways and character from Hugh Pendexter in connection with his story in this issue:

The Indian's eagerness for intoxicants, his loss of reason and self-restraint once he indulged, his precaution to usually choose by lot those who were to remain sober and protect the drinkers from killing each other, suggested this story. In "Account of Remarkable Occurrences," by Col. James Smith, a Pennsylvanian, taken prisoner to Detroit by the Indians, gives an account of how drinking bouts were policed, and in part says:

> —to conceal the arms and keep every dangerous weapon we could out of their way, and endeavor, if possible, to keep the drinking club from killing each other, which was a very hard task. Several times we hazarded our own lives, and got hurt in preventing them from slaying each other.

To elevate the incident above the plane of a drunk I have introduced Pontiac and find, now the yarn's finished, that he has "stolen" the scene from Red Jennet, the white ranger. Major Gladwin (spelled Gladwyn by some) like other commanders of frontier posts, was loath to believe the English were in any danger of an uprising once they had taken over the forts from the French. He was warned twice before he could give any heed, the second warning coming the night before Pontiac's first ruse to massacre the Detroit garrison. The ball-game, *baggatiway*, was used by the allied tribes to obtain entrance to Fort Mackinaw.

Making allowance for the barbarous manner of Indian warfare Pontiac was as much of a patriot as Kosciusko; he fought to deliver his people. I'll amend that a bit; in consideration of the Hun method of waging war Pontiac was chemically clean in his methods. Incidentally, scalping (derived from an old low-German word)— was not exclusively an Indian custom. The Scythians in Herodotus's time were given to the gentle practise.

Intertribal commerce, by means of transcontinental trade routes, east to west, was as much a part of Indian life as railroad traffic is of ours. Through these routes, plus the sign language and the various trade jargons, political alliances were speedily formed, such as Pontiac's which extended from the Atlantic to the head of the Mississippi.

Ensign Holmes, who reported the arrival of a "Bloody Belt" at the Kekionga village, opposite Fort Miamis (Fort Wayne) wrote he had obtained the belt "after a long and troublesome spell with them. . . . This affair is very timely Stopt." It was a queer twist of fate that Holmes, who was more on his guard than any other frontier commander, should have been decoyed from the fort by his Indian mistress, who urged him to visit a sick woman, and be shot from ambush.

When Pontiac and his warriors visited Gladwin with sawed-off guns under their blankets the signal for the massacre was to be Pontiac's act in holding up a peace belt in *reverse* position.

The common Indian term of "stinking water" for the ocean can be changed to "big water." "Grave posts" of the Algonquian tribes often had the upper half painted red.

Pontiac was murdered by a Kaskaskia Indian at Cahokia, Illinois, in 1769, who was paid a keg of liquor by an English trader. The late Dr. Cyrus Thomas, of the Bureau of American Ethnology, in an estimate of Pontiac says, "Pontiac, if not fully the equal of Tecumseh, stands closely second to him in strength of mind and breadth of comprehension. "When Pontiac met Sir William Johnson at Oswego in July, 1767, and, speaking for the western nations, renewed his assurances of friendship, he added, in referring to his recent revolt and defeat, "He who made the Universe would have it so."

I reckon I've touched on almost everything. I forgot the Algonquian custom of ransoming prisoners with three strings or belts of wampum. I have played that up correctly, "One to loosen the cord about the feet, etc."—HUGH PENDEXTER.

HERE is a sample of the kind of "Ask Adventure" question that will not be answered and ought not to be asked. Mr. Harriman was doubly justified in refusing to reply. A man who will ask such a question of a free service and then fail to include postage to carry the answer to him is beyond words.

Please send me literature covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada and Arizona, covering game, fur, camp, cabin, mines, minerals, mountains and homesteading.——— ——

Letters like this can not be answered, since they are fired at the general landscape, not at any one target or group of targets. I am always ready to do my best in answering any legitimate question, but the question or questions must be definite. This is too much like saying "Tell me everything you know and do it quick. I must catch a train in half an hour." Most men who ask questions like this carefully omit stamps, as in this case, and are therefore not entitled to answers.—E. E. H.

A LETTER from a man on the British front in France, a young friend of our comrade E. E. Harriman to whom the letter is written:

I was delighted to get your letter and am answering right away as we go into action again in a couple days. I took the liberty of showing your letter to my pals. They were "tickled to death" and our scouts will use your trick. Thank you much.

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This is an Imperial and not a Canadian regiment. We're the chaps who came over at the very beginning, knowing just how big the job was and is proving to be. We're all from overseas and we have in our ranks quite a few from the U. S. I must thank you for writing my wife. It was a nice thought! As the war has lasted so long we are having simple "Hell" to make ends meet and keep our little home together on the army pay and allowance. Neither she or our little girl is in good health, so you see how I appreciate any cheering thought conveyed to her. I'm very much in love, I confess.

You're doing your duty, Mr. Harriman, stick to it! I knew those Boches in the States would give you trouble when you declared war. You have a big job at home, I know, but show them no quarter. Believe me, and I speak simply as a soldier ready at any time to face his God, they have proved themselves entirely unworthy of it. I hope you get this note and reply to it. I should like to keep up the friendship and make your acquaintance some day. . . . . Sincere regards and "carry on."———— ——

MAYBE the Camp-Fire might have some mild interest in how our magazine is made. Ours is a meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers but we editors feel we are just as much members as anybody else, and maybe the rest of you would like to know about some of the things in our little field. I'll give 'em to you in small doses. There's nothing adventurous in them but, after all, the magazine belongs to all of us in a way and you may like to know more about its inside workings.

WHERE do our stories come from? It would take long to answer geographically and you already have some idea of that from what our writers tell us when they enter our writers' brigade. Our stories are selected out of a pretty large number of candidates. From 5,000 to 6,000 short stories, novelettes, novels and serials come to us every year. During 1917 they ranged from 358 to 598 a month. In addition there were poems to the extent of from 54 to 112 a month.

No, we don't read them all clear through. We can't. There wouldn't be time for anything else, and reading MSS. is only a part of the poor editors' work.

Personally, I seldom have time to read MSS. at the office. Take 'em home—nights and Sundays and generally Saturdays (the office closes at one on Saturdays) and, when they pile up, Wednesdays also are sometimes spent at home reading stories. Mr. Wade also reads a good many at home evenings and Sundays. Mr. Bittner and Mr. Clayton are kept too busy with copy-reading and proof-reading two hundred and sixty-odd thousand words every month and attending to other little chores like that to read MSS. except on occasion.

NO, WE can't read all of them clear through. Very many of them don't need more than a very little reading to show that they are unavailable. Some of these almost any one would know were unavailable; to detect the rest of these unavailables doesn't require any particular amount of brains but it does take considerable experience. Just as many of you can tell a poor horse without taking him all apart or a poor canoe without paddling a hundred miles in it. But on the other hand there are a good many stories that are read word for word from beginning to end, often by two, three or all four of us. I am the goat and all MSS. come to my desk first.

MAYBE some of you think life would be one happy dream if all the work you had to do were reading stories. I used to think that. Some of them it is a pleasure to read; even many besides the 4 per cent. we find available. But a large part of the unavailable 96 per cent., well, they become a bit monotonous after a while, even though a carefully worked-out system of informing writers as to our exact needs probably keeps some thousands of other unsuitable stories from coming in to us. In spite of all warnings and pleas and in spite of the masculine character of our magazine itself there are lots of women who are convinced we want stories opening with Miss Gwendolyn Panderbilt Tish in her boudoir or the well-known clubman and society leader Algernon Tryvial Tush being real haughty to his valet, or sweet Gracie or romantic Ethelinda hanging over the garden wall or something and talking a specially sickening version of love's young dream to some kind of adventurer that never happened.

But I didn't start to tell you our troubles. That's enough for this time.

SOME of you may not hitherto have come across the following bit of information:

To put "the fear of God" into Boche hearts, United States Marines in training here are practising the old-time rebel yell. Confederate veterans, who take keen interest in the activities of the sea-soldiers, are teaching the boys their battle-cry.

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YOU AND DEMOCRACY

I DO not know whether what follows is for you or not. Probably not, for the test is a severe one and only a small minority can pass it.

For nearly ten years all my time and strength that could justly be spared after my regular work was done has gone to one thing. The only exception was that I put this one thing partly aside to work for national defense because the need for every worker was very keen.

The first stage of this work is now done. The rest of it is your work as well as mine. Some of you will not do your share, for there are always the shirkers, the unfit and those who sleep. That means that the rest of us shall have to do more than our share. For the work must be done, and there is no one but ourselves to do it.

IT WILL not be easy work. You will not be paid for doing it nor will you make money from it in any other way. You will find that it takes more time than you like to spare. It will raise up enemies against you, though only the kind of enemies a man can be proud to have earned. It will not bring you fame. None of you will live to see the work completed, yet those who take up this work must keep on with it all their lives. You will be working for others rather than yourself, and often these others will not thank you for it. You will be giving rather than getting. It will be a grim fight, most of the time dull and dreary, and we shall not be alive when the full victory is won. I offer you only the promise that it will be a good fight and that if we are strong and brave we shall die unbeaten, knowing that we have not fought in vain and that others will carry on our battle.

You adventurers who face death so bravely in all the nooks and crannies of the world, have you the guts and staying powers to take on another kind of adventure, one in which you carry no arms, in which you have monotony instead of change, in which there is little excitement and much work? You stay-at-homes, have you the spirit to accept an adventure at your own doors, an adventure that will change the placid current of your lives and give you much trouble where you had none before?

I DO not paint the work as easy. Nor do I wish to make it sound so hard that the reckless spirits will take it up in mere bravado. Only the steadfast are wanted. Only those who will forget themselves in working for something bigger than themselves. If the task is not to your liking, you need read no farther. Turn away now.

I can hardly even outline the work to you in this first brief presentation. It is definitely and fully mapped out, but it can not be compressed into a small space. I can not prove to you here and now that it has been correctly mapped out, but I ask nothing final of you until it *is* proved to your satisfaction.

Of the very few who know anything whatever about it and have endorsed it you know only these—Talbot Mundy, Henry Oyen, Arthur D. Howden Smith. It is the kind of work for which you would expect as sponsors the best-known men in the United States before it would seem worth your considering. It has none of them as sponsors. They may come later, or they may not. I have not tried to get any of them. I turn to you of the Camp-Fire first. There is no intention of flattery. You are of all kinds, good and bad, great and small. But I have come to know many of you and to feel much closer to you than to people in general, and I have found among you many who are the type wanted for this work. For years I have, unknown to you, been filing away very carefully the names of those of you who seemed most ready and best fitted, but I am presenting the plan to all of you at the same time.

I GIVE here only the general nature and purpose of the plan, without any attempt to make it sound as if it were assured of success or a cure for all ills. I believe in it with my whole heart, but if you believed in it before you had examined into it very thoroughly I should be sure that you were not the kind of man who is most needed for the work. I want volunteers to stand side by side with me and fight this thing through, but it's not mere numbers that are needed; it's the *right kind*. And the right kind are not those who go into a thing until they know just what that thing is. This isn't a joy-ride; it's hard, thankless work and I want the quitters to quit before they begin.

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I want the plan to sound worse than it is, not better, and the worst sound I can give it is to call it a reform movement. We're all rather sick of reform movements and have pretty well lost faith in them. I want only those who still have faith enough to fight for what is right and who are so eager to fight for it that they will look carefully into every chance, however slight it may seem at first glance.

In the beginning I give you at least a few assurances. The plan is constructive, not destructive. It is evolutionary, not revolutionary. It begins at the bottom, deals with roots, not branches.

THE plan does not center about me. It will not be like most reform movements, for no part of its strength will be devoted to advertising its originator or any one else connected with it. The insane desire for personal prominence on the part of those who should have been bending all their efforts to further the work itself instead of themselves has been the rock that has wrecked most similar movements. There will be no such rock here. I use "I" freely, for that is the direct way of talking to a man and I am very much in earnest, but I'm asking you to help the work, not me. The plan has to do with public affairs, but I have no political ambitions. As to money, it is likely to leave my purse emptier, not fuller.

THE war has only intensified the growing unrest in the United States. What internal troubles will come to us after the war no man knows, but only a fool thinks there will be none or that they are not likely to shake us to our foundations. The war has already done us one service—it has forced us to see many problems and internal dangers that we could not or would not see before. That is all the war has to do with the following plan.

IF A man can not see the bad conditions in this country or the growing internal dangers that threaten us, if he is blind to the meaning of the increasing unrest among us, to the danger of our political corruption, to the menace of bitter class antagonism and of so much poverty in a country so rich, there is not time now to make him see.

But if you are not blind to the threatening problems that confront our country, I ask whether you can subscribe to the following creed:

WHEN people join together to form a nation or community they give up to it certain of their individual rights in order to get back from it things they value more than what they give up. They make themselves as a body supreme over themselves as individuals, always retaining the right to change or unmake, but only in accordance with the rules they have themselves laid down.

The American nation is the American people. Whatever it has we gave to it—liberty, justice, customs, land, property. Whatever it does is really done by the men, women and children who *are* the nation. Whatever it is or is not, it is we who make it so. If we are good citizens, it will be good; if we are bad citizens, it will be bad.

I am part of that nation, for I am one of the people. If I am a good citizen, I help make it good; if I am a bad citizen, I help make it bad. If I neglect to do my full duty as a citizen, I rob the nation of part of itself.

All the power of the United States of America, all control over it, really lies in the hands of the American people, in *our* hands. It is our own fault if we do not use our power and control and use them rightly.

OUR Government is only rules laid down by us and citizens chosen by us from among ourselves to manage our nation for us according to these rules of ours. Since we the people are the ones who make these rules and choose these officers, it is always we ourselves who are responsible for what they are and for what they do. If they are bad, it is always our fault at bottom and when we complain about them we are only complaining about ourselves, for we made the rules and chose the men and the real power over them is always in our hands.

We make our laws and choose our officers by majority rule, for democracy is rule by the people, and the will of the people as a whole can be determined only by following what most of the people want. Democracy is rule by the many, by the vote of the people as a whole. Whenever we allow the few to control the many, at primaries, conventions, elections, in Congress, State

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legislatures or anywhere else, or even to obstruct or postpone the will of the many, we have, by our weakness or neglect, injured our country and have struck a blow at the very heart of democracy itself.

A MAN or woman chosen by us as a public officer of any kind is merely our agent employed and entrusted by us to carry out our wishes and to protect our interests. If he fails to do this he is either inefficient or dishonest. If, in any matter great or small, he ever puts personal interest, party interest or any other interest before the interest of the people he represents, he has betrayed his trust. The public official who breaks his oath of office or violates the rights or property of the people is not merely a "grafter" or a "politician," but a liar and a perjurer, a thief, a prostitute and as much a traitor to his country as was Benedict Arnold. He has what is worse than the "yellow streak;" he has that infinitely dirtier and more shameful thing, the "black streak."

We ourselves are responsible for his treason, for we chose him. But ours is also the fundamental power and the everlasting duty to punish him. We have forgotten our power, but it is there. We have forgotten our duty, but it is there. His crime is against the whole people, against democracy, and is therefore greater than ordinary crime and deserves heavier punishment. "Graft" and "pull" and the "black streak" are not only the dirtiest words in our language but the most dangerous, for they mean rottenness in the very heart and core of our national being.

WE BELIEVE that the only permament and far-reaching remedy for our country's ills is better citizenship. You can not build a good house out of rotten bricks. Democracy, republicanism, socialism, monarchy, rule of capital, rule of labor, whatever form of government you please, will be rotten if the bricks from which it is builded are rotten, if its citizens are bad citizens.

We believe that citizenship can be systematically taught, in our schools and elsewhere, as easily as religion, manners, sociology, economics, Greek and physiology are taught, and that until this fundamental reform is put into operation all other reforms are but attempts to carry water in a sieve.

We believe that citizenship means obligation as well as privilege, and that the American citizen who takes without giving is a thief, a hog and a traitor.

We believe that all our country's hopes for the future are entirely dependent upon the establishment of clean, strong, alert citizenship among the American people.

We believe that the only way to establish this new standard of citizenship is through the union and concentrated endeavor of America's best citizens, working together along definite lines toward definite ends.

And we believe there are enough good citizens in the United States who can and will join in such a movement to give that movement a power and force that can not be resisted.

IF YOU can not subscribe to this creed, there is no need to read farther. But if you can subscribe to it, subscribe to it fully and earnestly, and are ready to work for it, I want you to say so and to send me your name and address by letter or post-card. It will not be published. It will bind you in no way. Word it in any way you please. All I wish is to know which ones of you are ready to work hard and faithfully for better American citizenship *if* I can give you a plan of campaign that meets your approval and convinces you that it can succeed.

Little by little, as space permits, I will give you the details of the plan. I make no large promises. I have no financial backing, no great men for sponsors. At this writing there is not yet even the nucleus of an organization. Just a plan, a definite, fully worked out plan that has grown slowly into final shape after ten long years of hard work and has won the endorsement of the very few who have seen it.

PERSONALLY, of course, I believe in it as firmly as I believe that 2 plus 2 equals 4, but most people believe in their own plans. You are not asked to believe in it or to subscribe to it in advance. You are asked only to register yourself as willing and ready to join in such a plan *if* it convinces you, to write down your name as an American who is ready to do his part for America's present and America's future as soon as he finds what seems to him a practical opportunity to make his work count.

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I do not expect a great many names, but those that do come in will be the names of men worth while. And these are what is needed. Money, sponsors, organization, those will come easily enough. Almost any kind of movement can get them. But the names of worth-while men are hard to get, and they are the one solid foundation upon which to build. This will not be a paper organization. It will mean real Americans really united for real citizenship.

There are many of you to whom I could appeal on grounds of friendship or of service rendered, but I do not keep books against my friends and this is not a personal matter. It is primarily a matter between you and your country, between you and real democracy. I enter into it only if I am able to furnish a plan of action that you are willing to follow, and only to ask you to work with me, not for me.

AND even if there were no plan already mapped out, those of you who think most carefully will see the immense value and possibilities of getting anywhere a list of all those Americans, of all classes, who believe in the need of better American citizenship and are ready to band together to secure it for America.

To all such Americans, men or women, I do make earnest appeal. There is much at stake for us and for our children and our children's children. Every man of us is needed and already too much time has slipped away. Act, and act now! Get your friends to act. After all, it is very little that is asked and it pledges you to nothing but your duty, as *you* see it, to your country. Send in your name. But not unless you are in earnest. If you are fully ready to stop grumbling over conditions and start to setting them right and keep on setting them right, send in your name. If you are so opposed to political and economic corruption that you are willing to work and keep on working for better things, send in your name. If you know that the future of America and of democracy in America depends entirely upon what her citizens do for America and if you are ready to do not only your own share but that of shirkers as well, send in your name. You are needed.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

SOME of you know "The Ace," but probably very few of you know who he is. Anyhow, he has been helping others and now he's asking others to help him a little. I've already put him in touch with one or two who can tell him something, but others of you can add still more and all of us of the Camp-Fire would like to hear as well.

In glancing over a few back numbers of *Adventure* I find some articles on some of our good old scouts of the earlier days. One of them refers to Wild Bill Hikok. Now I wonder if the gentleman who gave out the information could furnish me with a little more of Hikok's history? I would be more than thankful to him as I have an Indian tom-tom amongst my collection of curios, which Hikok got during a battle with Indians under the famous Chief Geronimo. It is the last tom-tom to which the chief ever danced a war-dance. It was presented to me by my father who was made a very good offer for it in Omaha, Nebraska. I wonder if some of our readers could furnish me with some interesting facts about Chief Geronimo?

I also have a pair of moccasins worn by Rain-in-the-face. Is he the man who killed General Custer?

P. S.—I wish you would furnish me with one of your Identification-Tags, which I think is a very good thing for a person to have on him at all times, although I still bear my U. S. Army tag. It was while in the service of our Uncle Sam, last Summer, that I had the name of "The Ace" attached to me. Of course this is rather a long story and I will probably tell it to you some other time if you are interested. There are a few little things that I am doing toward trying to make things easier for our boys now in service, therefore, I use the name of "The Ace" and I ask you kindly not to give out my true name, as I am not out for notoriety.—"THE ACE."

FROM Indianapolis comes a letter on Tiburon Island that isn't likely to lure anybody into going to that rather inaccessible and much-discussed region. Just the other day one of you wrote in about Tiburon and I did what I could to discourage him from going there.

While looking through *Adventure* the other evening, in search of something that I might have missed, I ran across the plea from a Hollander for assistance.

Don't you know, Mr. Hoffman, that the average man is just like a cow? The grass is always greenest in the next pasture; the mines are always best in the next range of hills; in the most inaccessible places are the best placers, and so on.

I wish that it were possible for me to let the entire world know and that the people thereof would believe me as regards Tiburon Island. It would save a lot of unnecessary suffering. In the first place, there is no gold, silver or precious stones on the island. I have been over it from end to end, and

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in the party were ten Yaqui Indians, than whom there are no better prospectors in Mexico, and one Mexican, by name J. M. Villavecencia. We found nothing of value in any form on the island. We saw a number of the Seri Indians, and they are the most God-forsaken, degraded lot of humans that exist on this globe. We found quite a number of small white-tail deer, rabbits, quail and coyote and this completes the list.

If there are any that want to go to the island, let they go to Guaymas, Sonora; there they can engage any of the numerous Yaqui boatmen and go to El Baril, in Lower California; then across the Gulf of California (distance from El Baril about eighty miles). At El Baril they will find Villavecencia has quite a stock of goods, and he will fit them out at a reasonable figure, and the sail from there can be made in a night, and with safety. The trip from the Southern Pacific Railway in Sonora can, in this way, be overcome and, believe me, the trip across the Altar Desert is no child's play. Perhaps that trip is all that makes the adventurer want to see Tiburon. What think you?

Hoping that this may save some fellow a lot of trouble and worry.— — — — —.

THE Adventurers' Club of New York has improved its patriotic record since last reported to you. There are forty-five stars on its service-flag and the exact membership was a hundred and seventy-six, not a hundred and eighty.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card—not* in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

Will sell—1914 October. 1915—August, 1916—all except January issue. 1917—complete to present issue. Purchaser to pay postal rates.— L. W. NICHOLS, 80 Prichard Ave., W. Somerville, Mass.

Wanted—Complete file of *Adventure*, or as nearly complete as possible. 15c each and carriage.—TALBOT MUNDY, care *Adventure*.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of about every five inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 731 Guardian Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for Adventure Magazine by our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
S. B. H. HURST, Box 892, Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Hurst.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay: river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri Valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3
Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. Mexico Part 2
J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1
ROBERT E. PINKERTON, care of Starbuck Ranch, Morrison, Colorado. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

12. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y.); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food, physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 397 Monadnock Bldg., San Francisco, Calif.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps, NOT attached)*

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Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Sayville, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, care R. J. Neuman, 160 Seaman Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

25. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Building, Los Angeles, Cal. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba. Or J. V. Knight, Director, Republic of Cuba News Bureau, Woolworth Building, New York.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

The White Man in the Orient

Question:—"I notice you answer questions on southern Asia, and it just occurred to me that you might be helpful in my quest for a position. I realize that you are no employment agent, nor is that the purpose of "Ask Adventure," but perhaps you might be instrumental in giving me the names and addresses of some firms operating in those parts.

"I am an experienced stenographer, a university man, and have just returned from the Mexican border where I served with the Nebraska National Guard for the past six months. What I would like in the way of employment is a position of timekeeper, or something similar, with a railroad construction company, or any firm doing business in any of those countries. I want to make it clear that I am not looking for an office which involves inside work. I am in excellent physical condition, could give bond in any reasonable amount, and would be willing to sign a contract for a considerable length of time if the work seemed agreeable."—JAMES J. LANGIN, Neola, Iowa.

Answer, by Mr. McCreagh:—I have had quite a few inquiries like yours, and I always have to tell the prospective employment seekers the same thing: employment in the Far East is difficult to get.

First of all, let me impress you with the fact that conditions are very different from what you have been accustomed to. There practically is no employment for white men of the kind you are looking for. A timekeeper's job, for instance, is always held by a native or a "breed" who works for one-tenth of the money that a white man could possibly live on. It is not an exaggeration to say that all employment that does not demand special training is given to such men. White men, broadly speaking, hold positions of administration and positions requiring a tried integrity.

You will understand from the above how difficult it is for a stranger to find employment; and you must realize that a white man can not start low down and work up to something worth while. For the sake of the white man's prestige in a country full of natives there is a very strictly defined line below which employers will not give a job to a white man, however willing and desirable he may appear.

The foregoing, of course, is an exposition of general conditions. Sometimes a really desirable job can be picked up on the spot; but when that is so it is always the result of unusual circumstances and can not be counted on by a man who is not prepared to spend perhaps several months waiting for something to turn up.

The only way to play safe is to apply at the home offices of Eastern concerns. Unfortunately, most of these are in England, or—before the war—in Germany. The only American concern I know of which sends men out is the Standard Oil. I believe that selected candidates undergo a short period of training here during which they receive a living allowance and are then shipped out under contract.

Sorry I can't hold out more hope; but I am speaking from hard and unpleasant experience.

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Game in Manitoba

Question:—"I will appreciate any information you can supply me on Manitoba, especially relating to hunting, fishing and trapping.

"What implements are necessary? What would be approximate cost of living in Summer and Winter? Also, are there good waterways?"—S. A. Morey, Jr., Passaic, N. J.

Your letter to Mr. C. L. Gilman has been forwarded to Mr. Carson for a reply, as Mr. Gilman is now in the Army. Hence the delay.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—I assume the eastern part of Manitoba is the territory regarding which you desire information and will proceed on this presumption.

Manitoba is an inland province with an almost unlimited waterway system. The Rainy River district in Ontario is on her eastern boundary, and from Lake of the Woods a man can canoe it right into the city of Winnipeg by going down the lake to Winnipeg River and Lake and then up the Red River. This is a delightful trip and the hunting and fishing are excellent.

By the way, I have spoken of Manitoba as an inland province, yet her fishing industry amounts to something over a million dollars per year. There is considerable trapping to be had in the territory I have mentioned, such fur as mink, rat, fox and lynx being obtainable; while bear, deer and the lordly moose are found throughout the district. Good guides were obtainable at Rat Portage, now Kenora, a short time ago, and I presume are to be had there yet, as the country is far from being thickly settled.

Northeast from the head of Lake Winnipeg the canoe trip by way of the Nelson River may be extended to Port Nelson on the James Bay. There are several bad rapids where the greenhorn will do well to go ashore and portage, particularly those below Split Lake. A good guide is a necessity for this trip, but the country is well worth seeing for any one who can afford to make it as it should be done.

South and east of the Nelson is an immense tract of country, well watered with lakes and rivers, all of which find their way to Nelson's Bay. This section has been one of the richest fur-producing places for the Hudson's Bay Company for many years.

My practical knowledge of the trapping game is too limited to be of much value in advising as to outfit required, but by writing to the H. B. Factor at Norway House, Man., you will probably learn all you wish to know.

A mosquito and blackfly proof tent are absolutely necessary in Summer, as these pests are very much in evidence and seem to prefer a stranger to a resident. In the Winter the cold is at times intense, making a good, warm hut indispensable.

There is ample timber both for building and fuel and there is no difficulty in laying in a store of fish and meat before the deep snows come in January. Other supplies may be obtained at the Hudson's Bay Posts, which are fairly numerous throughout this region.

Plenty of good warm clothing should be provided, especially foot-wear, for this is just about the hardest country on shoes and boots that I have ever been in. The many limestone outcroppings may be responsible for this, but be the reason what it will, she is sure some cultus country on shoepacks.

As to prices and other costs, I can not say. War conditions have altered everything to such an extent that the old-time rates no longer apply. Write to the Hudson's Bay Company's Stores, Winnipeg, for prices, as they are the only people I can think of who would be competent to advise you in this matter.

Should you not care to wander so far afield, I would suggest that the Rainy River country offers many inducements to the hunter and fisherman, Kenora, Ont., making an excellent outfitting point.

Your letter does not state whether or no you are planning a tour or contemplate spending at least a year in the wilderness, trusting to your rifle and traps for a grub-stake. I have taken it for granted that the latter was the case and suggested what I consider the most advisable locality.

Canoeing The Delaware

Question:—"I am writing for information relative to the Delaware River. A friend and I have decided to make a canoe trip in the first part of September, and have chosen the Delaware not only because we have heard it is through a beautiful country, but because it can be easily reached from here.

"We have eight days in which to make our trip and my comrade is in favor of starting from South Kortright, Ulster County, N. Y. We are both agreed that we wish to commence our trip as far up the river as is feasible, but my contention is that, should we start as far up as South Kortright, which has an elevation of about 1,500 feet above tidewater, we will encounter numerous falls and rapids too shoal to navigate and will be forced to make frequent portages. My plan is to start at either Cadosia or Hancock, N. Y., or, if necessary, at Port Jervis.

"Can you advise me which would be the better plan, and also let me know what general conditions we may expect to encounter, our intention being to rough it, camping along the way and traveling as light as possible. About how great a distance might we expect to cover in a day?

"It seems to me the question of a destination does not make so great a difference as choosing a starting-point, as I am told that railroad connections are very fair after getting as far down as Delaware Water Gap and from there on.

"If you do not consider the Delaware River trip feasible, can you suggest any other trip in this vicinity which you consider better and which we could make in the allotted time?"—G. W. Swinbourne, East Orange, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Indians paddled down the Delaware River and all its forks. There were and are dams and rapids which you would carry around, on all the forks. I am not sure regarding the stretch between South Kortright and Delhi, but from Delhi down you would be able to make good way in canoes, but with carries at intervals, of course.

If you wished to do so, letters addressed to postmasters and hotelkeepers at towns along the way would bring you definite local conditions. I was down the river from Delhi to below Hamden, following the road on a motorcycle—beautiful

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country, long, still waters and short, shallow rapids. Probably you would have to drag down some of these shallows and around the dams at intervals, but you would make twenty or thirty miles a day. At this rate you would make about 160 miles through the best part of the river (west branch.)

If you were lucky and struck a good water—fresh, or flood—you would make more than I have indicated.

Personally, I prefer to take my time, not to try to rush too fast, or overwork.

There were wooded mountains, farmed lowlands, occasional towns and hamlets from Delhi down. The west branch emerges from the Catskills above South Kortright and follows a narrow but rather flat bottomland where I saw it. The highway is near the river on the way down.

Springs and mountain brooks supply drinking-water. You will likely be bothered by mosquitoes unless you carry mosquito netting to swing over you and around you at night. On the go they won't bother much, and September is a good month. You would obtain supplies from day to day.

A Chance in Yucatan

Question:—"Would like information regarding Yucatan, Mexico. What sort of climate? How about mosquitoes?

"Can you get work there in the mechanical line?" — —— Baltimore, Md.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Owing to the high prices for henequin, the chief product of Yucatan, due to the war, the crop will be worth about fifty million dollars this year. This will no doubt make conditions better than usual throughout the entire state. Most of this crop is exported via Progreso, a city of about five thousand inhabitants, which is served by the Ward Line from New York and by various other lines from all of the principal ports of Europe. I understand at present the Ward Line has sailings every fortnight, instead of monthly, as they did formerly. The port is very poor, due to shoals, and vessels, except those of very light draft, are compelled to anchor out four or five miles. At the present time the bulk of the henequin crop is being exported and the appearance of the bales of henequin piled on the wharves in Progreso resembles the piles of cotton in New Orleans or Galveston during the "cotton rush."

Merida, the capital of Yucatan, is located thirty miles south of Progreso, via the United Railways of Yucatan, a three-foot gage road which also continues on southwesterly along the coast to Campeche, twenty-five thousand inhabitants, port and capital of the state of Campeche. The fares on this road are very cheap, being two cents per mile for the best accommodations.

Looking out of the window after you leave Progresso you will first notice dry, barren, parched plains, abounding in cacti, coarse shrubs and coarse grasses. But here and there are breaks in the barrenness and you catch sight of swamps covered with lilies and other water plants. Soon you begin sighting the fields of maguey plants, from which henequin is manufactured, and the workers. Long before the city of Merida the landscape is dotted with windmills and finally when the city is reached one would imagine himself in Holland were it not for the fact that the windmills are of modern pattern. These mills are used to pump water from beneath the surface of the earth, for there are very few lakes and streams in the neighborhood.

Merida has a population today of sixty-two thousand and is very modern in appearance, although it was founded in 1542. The cathedral, which was built in 1561, is still standing and is well preserved. The old and the new types of architecture mingle. Recently many of the streets and avenues have been paved and several lines of tramcars constructed. Merida also has electric lights, telephones, fine public buildings, banks, a board of trade, a theater, an excellent museum, good schools and extensive parks. The wages for laborers are from one dollar and fifty cents to three dollars a day, American money, and very much higher for skilled workmen, such as stationary engineers, mechanics, etc. The hours of labor are eight, and only five days are worked, the other two being given up to rest and recreation.

Climatically, Merida is hot but healthful. During the hours of midday the sun's rays are extremely unpleasant, especially during March and April. Winter, however, is very pleasant. The temperature for the year ranges from seventy-five to ninety-eight degrees Fahrenheit. Mosquitoes are plentiful, but can be avoided by sleeping in screened rooms or under a net.

The first two or three months are the worst, when a man just arrives in the tropics. After that he becomes accustomed to it.

Government Forestry Service

Question:—"Can you tell me the best way to get into the Government forestry service as a ranger? What is the pay?" — E. W. Moon, Laredo, Texas.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—The only way to get into the forest service is through a civil service examination. Write to Agricultural Department, Washington, Forest Service section, asking for information.

The pay begins at ninety dollars a month and the candidate buys his own horse. The service pays for its keep, though.

A man has a chance to get up to sixteen hundred a year before he jumps to be a supervisor. Above that he can go to district forester if the incumbent dies or quits, and he is in line for the step.

Among the duties for which a man must prepare, are map-making, fire-fighting, lumber-cruising and sealing, bridge-building, stock-counting, watching and checking out, collections for grazing rights, lumber sales, etc., giving aid to settlers and others who are injured or sick, the rescuing of lost parties, etc., etc.

A man must be a good mountaineer, good shot with rifle or revolver, good with an ax, cool-headed, courageous and full of initiative. That kind of a man is in demand when any vacancy occurs, but no one knows when the vacancy will occur. Right now, since they have sent so many forest service men to France, should be a good time to try. Southern California service is a snap compared to that farther north, as here there is hardly any lumber, stock or mining interests to look after. Just watch for fires, keep an eye on campers, aid the game warden and award camp-sites.

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ADVENTURE HAS FOUND ONE MAN IN FIVE ASKED FOR DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS

CEASE, LEWIS. Would like to get in touch with some member belonging to "Gun Crew" stationed aboard training ship at Newport-News, Va., during September, 1917, in regard to my brother. He was accidently killed while doing his duty on the afternoon of the 20th of September, 1917. Any one of the crew please write to me. —Address OSCAR H. CEASE, Schofield Barracks, M. G. Co., 32nd U. S. Infantry, Honolulu, Hawaii.

ANDERSON, NELSON MILES. Last heard of in West. Born in Bolivar, Mo., in 1899. May have enlisted in Army or Navy.—Address J. S. LEWIS, Post Telegraph Department, Kansas City, Mo.

McGORRY, GUY LAWRENCE AND GUERDON (Two Brothers). Formerly of Rochester. N. Y. Last heard of in Brooklyn, N. Y., 1902, living with their mother on Bridge St., Guy at that time working as watchman around Jersey City. I have something of importance to communicate to them in regard to their oldest brother.—Address LLEWELLYN M. AMES, 339 Essex St., Bangor, Me.

S., RAY T. Won't you please come home or write? Your dear old mother and your wife are broken-hearted over your continued absence.—Address E. B. S., care ADVENTURE.

KEENE, CARL HOWARD. Height 5 ft. 10 in.; complexion fair; eyes blue; hair mixed brown. Wore eyeglasses for astigmatism, and No. 7 shoe. Worked in Providence, R. I. for the R. I. Electric Company. Left them and joined Bingham Bros. circus. Went to Spokane, Washington. Last heard in Chelan Falls, Washington, in 1910.—Address MRS. C. M. DORR, Union, New Hampshire.

HYER, JOE. Left Kentland, Indiana, year of 1896, when 19 years old, never being heard from. Had dark hair, brown eyes; weight about 130 lbs.; medium height. His sister and mother need him.—Address MRS. HARRIET HARRINGTON, 220 E. 46th St., Chicago Illinois.

HUTTON, WILLIAM K. (KERSS). Last heard from in Spring of 1915. Was then at Altmas, Calif., from which place he intended going to Santa Monica or vicinity to take up poultry business. Was in 5th Cav. Regiment, Army from 1911-14, discharged in May. Age about 28; height 5 ft. 9 in.; 150 pounds, dark complexion, black hair and eyes. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his old pal.—Address FRANK E. ARNOLD, 45 Governor St., Hartford, Conn.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the issue of February 3rd, each year, all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

CLARKE, HARRY, also known as "Trigger." Your old partner "Kid Hunt" would like to hear from you. Worked with him for the Overland Company, Elmira, N. Y.—Address PRIVATE HUNT, 58th Aero Squad, Aviation Station, Morrison, Va.

FISHER, FRED L. Would appreciate any information as to his present address. Home address was Knoxville, Iowa and Youngstown, Ohio. Was in Co. D, 51st Iowa Inf. in Spanish-American War. Last heard from near Mexican border or that territory.—Address REA Z. GAISER, 1424 9th Ave., Seattle, Wash.

MAJOR, A. S. Last heard of at Clarksville, Tenn., in 1900. Any information concerning him since that time or his present address will be gratefully received by his brother. Would be glad to pay a reward for the information.—Address W. H. MAJOR, 437 Capital Ave., Atlanta. Ga.

MORRISON, ALBERT. Last heard of six years ago in Portland, Oregon. His cousin would like to hear from him.—Address PRIVATE PAUL MORRISON, Bat. F, 25th U. S. Cavalry, F. S. D. A., Russell, Wyoming.

KRATZ, HERMAN A. Last heard of in Honolulu 5 years ago. Height 5 ft. 7 in.; weight about 160 lbs.; dark hair. Studied for about 12 years for doctor and missionary in California.—Address N. KRATZ, Listowel, Ontario, Canada.

BOULTON, GEORGE W. Last seen in Brooklyn in April. 1913; was seen in New York on E. 22nd St., near 3rd Ave., in May, 1915. Your sister would like to hear from you.—Address MRS. D. F. DENNEHY, 3210 Fulton St., Richmond Hill. N. Y.

McKENNA. Went to Yucatan with me in the Winter of 1916. Any one knowing his whereabouts address H. THOMSON, Canadian Engineers, St. Johns, P. Q.

POAG, JAMES. Wanted. Lived at 1505 13th Avenue, Seattle, Washington. Joined Nat'l Guard at Seattle in May or June. About 5 ft. 8 in. tall; dark and large scars on stomach. Was one of J-C twins. Very important.—Address J. B. LEWIS, 1432 13th Ave., Seattle, Wash.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-January or First February issues of *Adventure.* They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

ALI MFG. CO.; Byron, W. A.; Cole, Lubin, Merton; Coolidge, Frank Townley; Dove, Emery; Drummond, J. A.; Foster, Tom; Pollen, John C. B.; Reiche, Carl; Rose, Texas (Tom); Sheldon, Wm. X.; Smith, Joseph, Burton; Talmadge, Henry Arthur; Tarrants, Luther and Wm. Benjamin; Val; Wade, Robert Lee; Wallis, Charles Edward; Willis, Parker or Parker, Willis; Winnie, Leon Loudon; Yeusan, Alfred.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

HASTLAR GAL BREATH.

NUMBERS L. T., 284, C 203, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address HARRY ERWIN WADE, care *Adventure.*

Besides the stories mentioned in the ad on page 2 the First March *Adventure* will contain: "Blaming it On Benny," a railroad story by Russell A. Boggs; "On Guard" by Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton; "The Plural Number," a story of the Western desert by Wilbur Hall; "Christmas Eve at Sulphur Flats," a tale of Alaska by Robert Russell Strang; "Boy-boys Great Discovery" by Samuel Edward Harris; Mr. Hobbs," a South Sea Island story by Hugh S. Miller; "The Golden Ushabti Affair," by William A. Shryer; "The Magic Arrow" a Pendexter Indian story; "Deadlight Grogan," a sea story by David Douglas; and another instalment of "With Sharp Sword-Edges."

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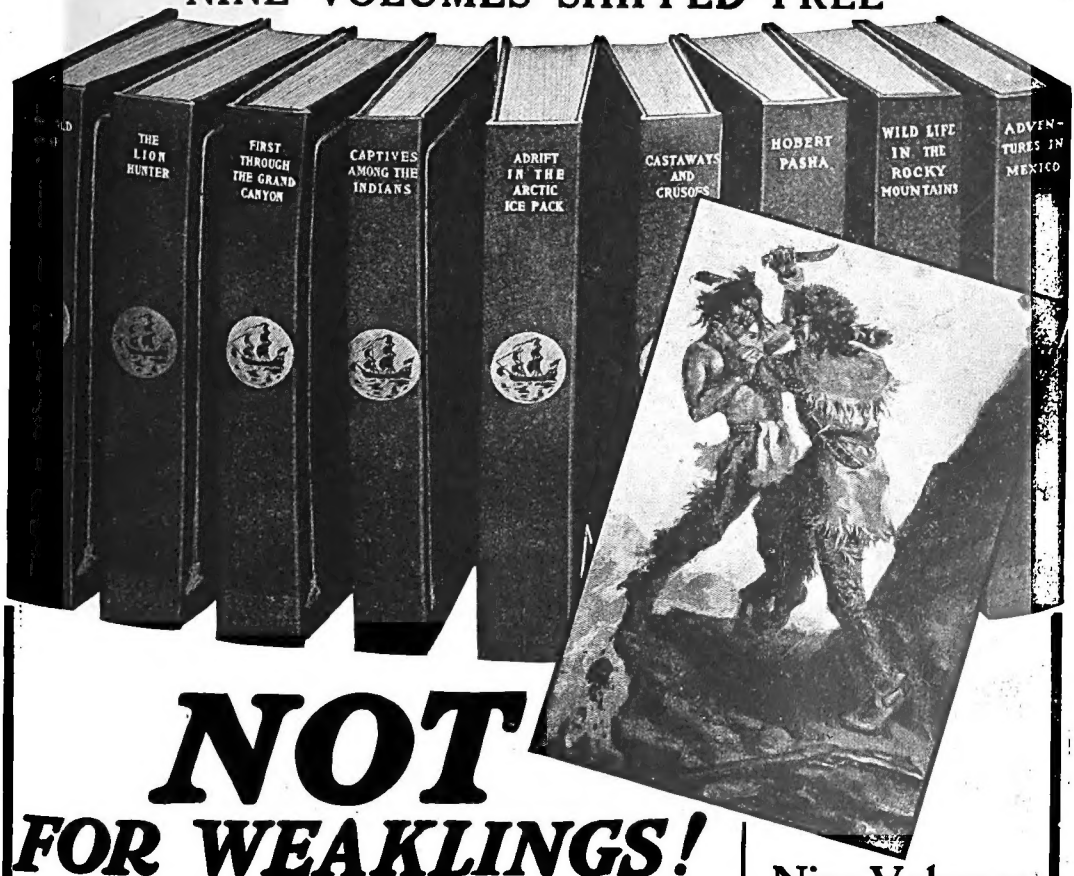
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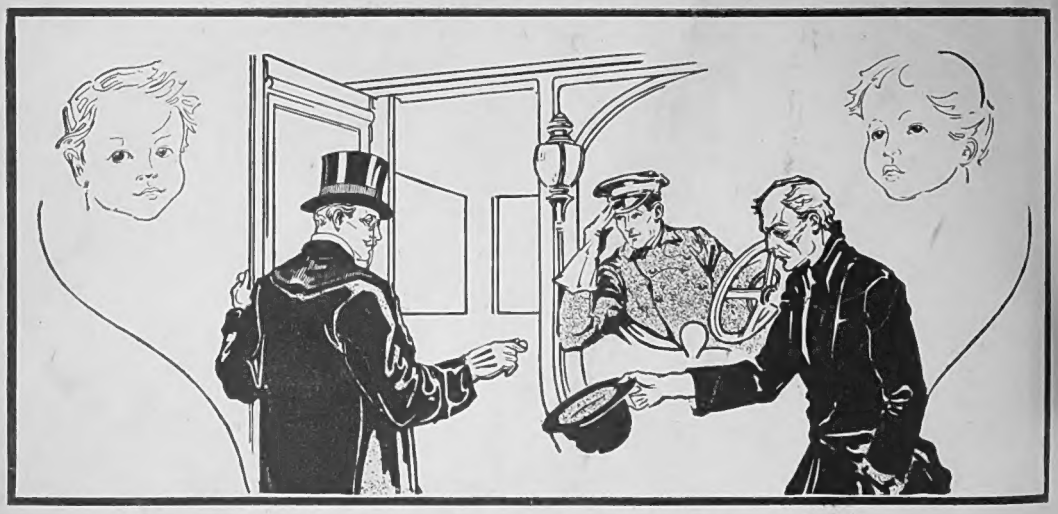

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How to think "all around" any subject.
How to throw the mind into deliberate, controlled, productive thinking.
Detailed directions for Perfect Mind Concentration.
How to acquire the power of Consecutive Thinking, Reasoning, Analysis.
How to acquire the skill of Creative Writing.
How to guard against errors in Thought.
How to drive from the mind all unwelcome thoughts.
How to follow any line of thought with keen, concentrated Power.
How to develop Reasoning Power.
How to handle the mind in Creative Thinking.
The secret of Building Mind Power.
How the Will is made to act.
How to test your Will.
How a Strong Will is Master of Body.
What creates Human Power.
The Six Principles of Will Training.
Definite Methods for developing Will.
The NINETY-NINE METHODS for using Will-Power in the Conduct of Life.
Seven Principles of drill in Mental, Physical, Personal Power.
FIFTY-ONE MAXIMS for Applied Power of Perception, Memory, Imagination, Self-Analysis, Control.
How to develop a strong, keen gaze.
How to concentrate the eye upon what is before you—object, person, printed page, work.
How to become aware of Nerve Action.
How to keep the body well-poised.
How to open the Mind and Body for reception of incoming power.
How to throw off Worry.
How to overcome the tyranny of the Nervous system.
How to secure steady nerves.
How to maintain the Central Factors of Body health.
Difficulties in Mastering Harmful Habits.

This is only a partial list—a complete list of contents would almost fill this page.

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